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SCOTT McCLOUD

#18

MARVEL'S

CAROL KALISH

CALLS 'EM AS SHE SEES 'EM!

ROD REED

WRITER OF THE ORIGINAL CAPTAIN MARVEL

HEAVY METAL ARTIST--

ARTHUR SUYDAM

MUSES ABOUT MUSIC, MOVIES & MUDWOGS

DAVID ANTHONY KRAFT'S COMICS

interview

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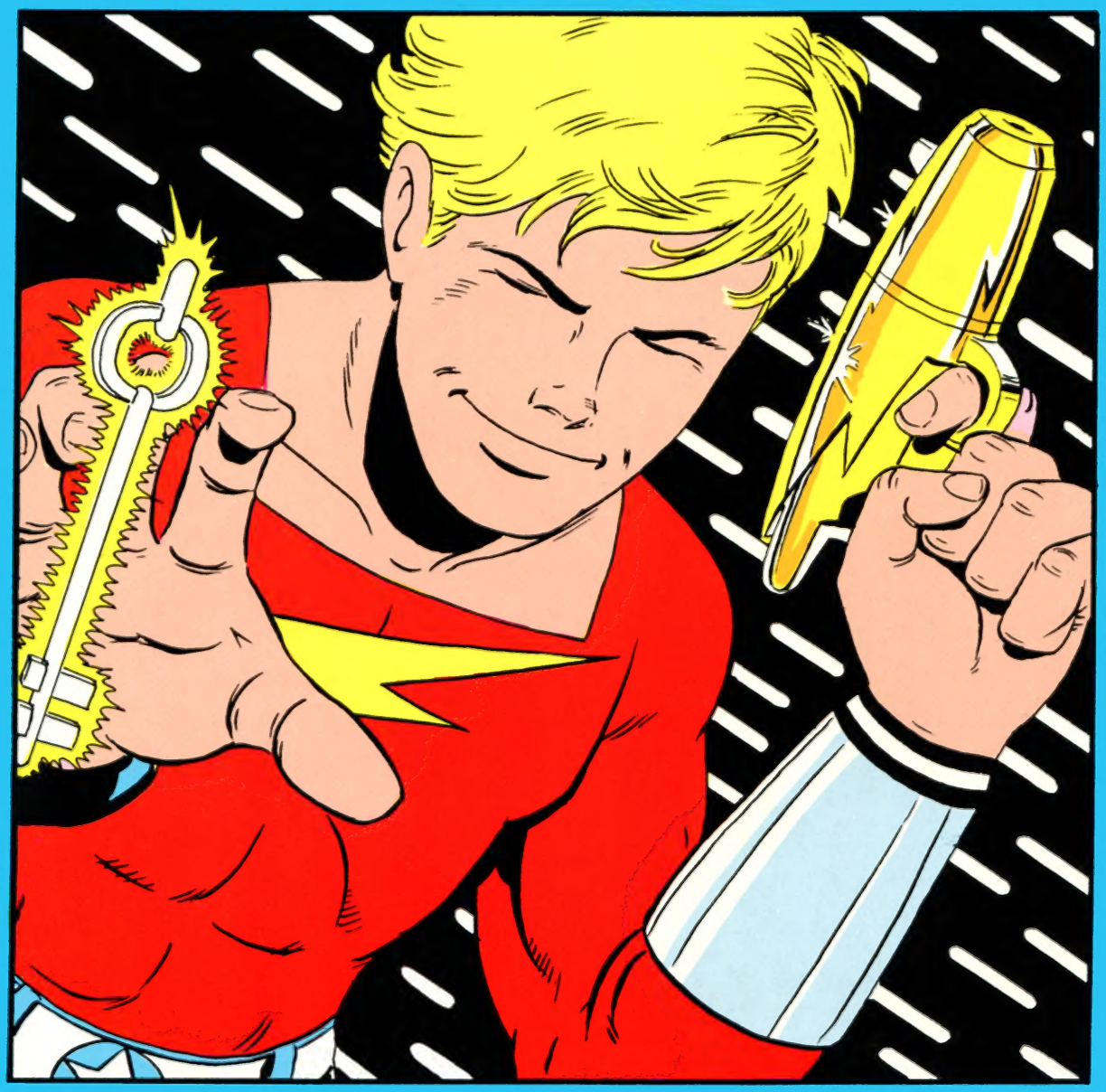

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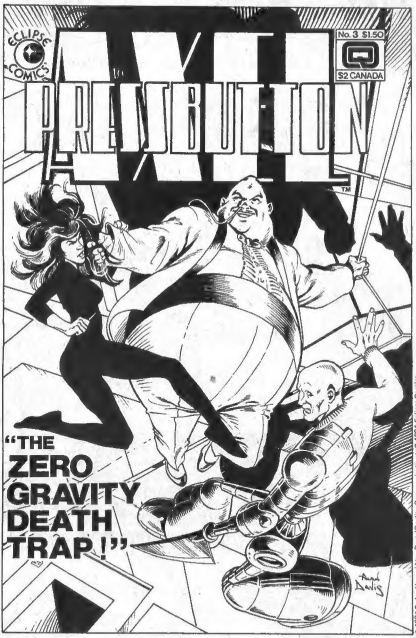

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The existence of this magazine owes a lot to technology.

There was a time, not so very long ago, when it would've taken a staff of a dozen or more people to produce a monthly magazine like this one--not to mention an added complement of production crew members. The economics and expenses would have made a controlled circulation publication targeted at a select group, as is COMICS INTERVIEW, not only impossible but unthinkable.

There was a time, not so long ago, when tape recorders were neither common nor affordable. They were big, heavy--and very expensive. You could not walk around wearing one on your belt, the way I do today. The alternative--having a stenographer take down conversations in shorthand--would have made a magazine composed almost entirely of interviews too expensive and time-consuming to consider.

There was a time, not so long ago, when type was set by hand, one letter at a time, and cast in lead. A magazine with the amount of copy this one contains would have kept even the best setter of type busy all month long. Now technology makes it possible to set as much type in a single day as once would have been likely in a month.

Add to that: Photo-offset printing in place of letterpress. Laser scanning for color separations. And the latest triumph of technology -- computers. What not so long ago would have warranted a massive amount of money, the work of a small army, and a vast increase in readers or cover price to pay for it all--is now available to you every month, in the form of COMICS INTERVIEW.

You will hear it said all too often that technology is dehumanizing. It's even the theme of many comics stories, some of which I've written myself: Man versus Machine. It makes a good story--but it isn't true.

-David

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Magnificent Full-Color Funny-Animal Graphic Novel Offered to U.S.!

Fantagraphics Books will be distributing ***The Beast Is Dead***, a magnificent full-color, hardbound graphic novel published in France. Entirely written in English, the 92-page graphic novel chronicles World War II using a cast of wolves, bears, dogs, rabbits, cows, monkeys, etc.

The Beast Is Dead, originally published in 1944, is drawn in full process color by classic French artist CALVO, in a magnificently detailed style that recalls '40s Disney cartoon features. The story, by VICTOR DANCETTE, is a venomous chronicle of the war years. The result is a breathtaking epic—one of the strangest and most beautiful publications of the year! *This book has to be seen to be believed. . .* and Fantagraphics Books is selling it at an *incredibly* low price considering the production values, art quality, and page count!

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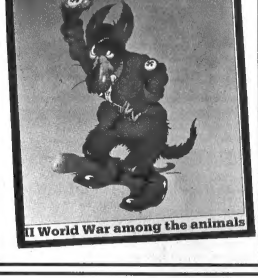
The Beast Is Dead. 92 pages, full-color, hardcover. Distributed by Fantagraphics Books, Inc. Shipping in April. $12.95. (Canada: $16.95).



Peter Bagge Serves Up 32 Screwball Pages Of His NEAT STUFF!

From the wilds of New York comes Fantagraphics Books' companion magazine to *Love and Rockets*: ***Peter Bagge's Neat Stuff!***

Bagge, already famous for his contributions to *Weirdo* (which he edits) and other newave productions, here serves up 32 pages of hilarious commentary on the modern life we lead. Included is the "Girly Girl" saga ("She's got her own special brand of humor!"); "Minimum Wage Love"; "Ugly Is In!"; "The Goon in the Moon Constructs a Friend"; the familial escapades of "The Bradleys"; a set of riotous "baseball cards" on the back cover; and, as a change of pace, the louching psychological study "Sometimes I Think I'm Going Crazy."

Peter Bagge's Neat Stuff will appeal to the hip crowd that enjoys *Love and Rockets*, *Weirdo*, and similar more mature magazine titles.

Note: Peter Bagge's Neat Stuff *carries the advisory "Recommended for Mature Readers."*

Peter Bagge's Neat Stuff #1. 32 pages. Published by Fantagraphics Books, Inc. Shipping in April. $1.95. (Canada: $2.50).

Distribution of Retail Bags Postponed Until May

Fantagraphics Books has postponed the distribution of the promotional retail bags originally scheduled for release in January, 1985, until May 1985. This delay will allow the bags to carry the logo and artwork for the upcoming ***Mechanics*** color mini-series, also scheduled for release in May. Fantagraphics Books will also use the extra time now available to find a more efficient way to distribute the bags, a way in which the bags can reach more retailers than were reached with the previously-released ***Dalgoda*** bags.

Artwork for these two new bags will include a ***Mechanics*** illustration by JAIME HERNANDEZ, logos for both *Love and Rockets* and ***Mechanics***, a ***Dalgoda*** illustration by DENNIS FUJITAKE, and the ***Dalgoda*** logo.

Retailers who received the ***Dalgoda*** bags reported increased sales as a result. Fantagraphics Books expects this set of bags to be even more effective as it helps to promote two color comics instead of just one.

JOURNEY #19: The Solitary!

Frontiersman Wolverine MacAlistaire and poet Elmer Allyn Kraft are trekking across Michigan in seach of the settlement known as New Hope. Just as their journey nears an end, the two come face-to-face with the hermit called The Solitary. Is he friend or foe? Only creator WILLIAM MESSNER-LOEBS knows—and he ain't telling.

Journey #19. 32 pages. Published by Fantagraphics Books, Inc. Shipping in early April. $2.00. (Canada: $2.50).

1985 William Messner-Loebs

LOVE AND ROCKETS #12: Rocky and Fumble Star!

The outer-space hijinx of JAIME HERNANDEZ's "Rocky and Fumble" strip are promoted to full-length story in ***Love and Rockets #12***. Not as well-known as the "Mechanics" and "Locas Tambien" series, "Rocky and Fumble" has appeared in a two short stories in previous ***L&R***, and tells tales of a future girl and her robot with the same verve, imagination, and wackiness that Jaime puts in his other strips.

This issue also marks a new starting point for the characters of GILBERT HERNANDEZ's "Heartbreak Soup" strip. Moving in new and unexpected directions, this episode will see the introduction of new characters and a new outlook for other residents of Palomar.

1985 Gilbert Hernandez

1985 Jaime Hernandez

Retailers: *Please note that* ***L&R*** *#1-6 are now SOLD OUT from Fantagraphics Books and that distributors' supplies are dwindling. Get 'em quick—especially since May will see the premiere of the full-color* ***Mechanics*** *mini-series, written and drawn by JAIME and colored by PAUL (Mr. X #1) RIVOCHE!*

Note: Love and Rockets *carries the advisory "Recommended for Mature Readers."*

Love and Rockets #12. 32 pages. Published by Fantagraphics Books, Inc. Shipping in April. $1.95. (Canada: $2.50).

AH #70: Squadron Supreme! AH #71: Alan Moore Talks!

Amazing Heroes #70 previews the off-beat MARK GRUENWALD/ BOB HALL *Squadron Supreme* series. The first half of the *Brave and the Bold* checklist. Checking in with DENIS KITCHEN of Kitchen Sink Press. The Golden Age Directory covers Plastic Man and others. The Spider-Man chapter of Jacobs and Jones's "The Comic Book Heroes." Cover feature: The Squadron Supreme.

Amazing Heroes #71 features a long interview with the Englishman who has turned comics on their ear, the prolific ALAN MOORE. Alan will talk about *Swamp Thing*, Marvelman, working on *American Flagg!*, and his new projects. Part two of the Brave and the Bold checklist. Part nine of the Golden Age directory. Plus the Amazing Heroes Top 100. Outrageous cover portrait of Moore by Swamp Thing artist STEVE BISSETTE!

1984 Steve Bissette

Each issue also features news, letters, an editorial, a silly cover, coming comics, reviews by R.A. Jones, plus a few surprises!

Amazing Heroes #70. 68 pages. Published by Fantagraphics Books, Inc. Shipping in early April, $1.95. (Canada: $2.50).

Amazing Heroes #71. 68 pages. Published by Fantagraphics Books, Inc. Shipping in late April. $1.95. (Canada: $2.50)

COMING IN MAY: FIRST MECHANICS ISSUE, MORE!

Mechanics #1 *begins the serialization of JAIME HERNANDEZ's "Mechanics" story from* Love and Rockets *#2, newly colored, with a new back-up strip, a new cover, and an introduction by ALAN MOORE:*

Amazing Heroes Preview Special #1—*AH's wildly successful "Preview" concept, now in its own semi-annual magazine;*

Dalgoda #6*, featuring the climax of the first storyline, and the conclusion of "Grimwood's Daughter";*

The Ditko Collection Volume II*, featuring more classic material from the co-creator of Spider-Man;*

Prince Valiant: "The Eternal Quest"—*the follow-up to the superb "Lithway's Law," still full-color;*

The Comics Journal #99*, featuring an epic interview with FRANK MILLER;*

Plus Hugo, Journey, Amazing Heroes, and more!

1985 Jaime Hernandez

Amazing Heroes Switches

Due to conflicting schedules, we have decided to switch the cover features on ***Amazing Heroes #67*** and ***#68***. Originally scheduled to preview FRANK MILLER's new Batman and Elektra features, ***#67*** will now preview *Secret Wars II*, while ***#68***, originally intended for *Secret Wars*, will display Miller's new work. This will allow us to showcase more of Miller's new artwork, as well as getting the "Secret Wars" preview out before the actual series premieres. We apologize for any inconvenience, but hope that the equal strength of both cover features will eliminate any problems.

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1985 Peter Bagge

"I was the first 'outsider' to do a CAPTAIN

...NOW LET'S SEE IF YOU'VE GOT IT STRAIGHT, ROD OL' BUDDY--
THE NEXT STORY TAKES PLACE IN A COAL MINE AT MIDNIGHT...
AND THE ONE AFTER THAT DURING A BLIZZARD IN THE ANTARCTIC...
AND, OH YES, IF YOU COULD MAKE THEM BOTH SERIALS -- AND NO
MOB SCENES, NOT EVEN PENGUINS!
Schaffenberger

Marvel Family characters © 1984 DC Comics, Inc Art: Kurt Schaffenberger

When I was drawing Captain Marvel, Junior, and any time I would get a script by Rod Reed, I could be sure that there were at least a dozen crowd or mob scenes in each one," says artist Kurt Schaffenberger of his Golden Age comics collaborator. "One day I told him I thought he was a frustrated Cecil B. DeMille and that he threw in mob scenes whenever he ran out of ideas, inspiration, or both!"

Rod Reed served as executive editor of the Fawcett comics line from 1941 to 1943, the first to follow in the footsteps of the legendary Bill Parker, then left staff to become a freelancer and to script many of the most humorous Captain Marvel tales of the Golden Age.

Comics historian and Captain Marvel scholar John G. Pierce tracked down Rod Reed for the following reminiscences of the Big Red Cheese and of an earlier comics era (if you're interested in reading more about Fawcett and the original Marvel Family, send $1.50 for John's fanzine, THE WHIZ KIDS, to 328 Powhaten Avenue, Columbus, OH 43204).

JOHN PIERCE: *Kurt Schaffenberger made the comment that you were "a frustrated Cecil B. DeMille," because of the mob scenes you wrote into your stories.*

ROD REED: "The **DeMille** Complex" has been a running gag between Kurt and me for some time. Often when writing to him I sign my name as "Cecil." But gags at base have a grain of truth. You can picture the

MARVEL script after Bill Parker."

ROD REED

artist at his lonely drawing board picking up his script and saying, "Good grief! Another scene from BEN HUR!" One sheds a tear. No doubt I sometimes put into a scene more characters and action than Kurt deemed necessary or appropriate — but if I had any scripts handy, I bet I could put on a sterling defense. In any case, his bleats didn't fall on deaf ears. I modified my **DeMille** complex. I put in lots of one-head close-ups.

JOHN: *How did you write your scripts — minimum of detail or plenty of it?*

ROD: I always put in as little description as possible — except in key scenes where it was important to have action, settings and background to further the story. I'm sure I got over what **Schaffenberger** accused me of — trying to stuff too much business into a scene — pretty quickly. Kurt kidded me about my complex but never complained to management. **C.C. Beck** never squawked about my scripts, either. In fact, I have an unsolicited testimonial from him about the last thing I wrote that he was to draw — a story about the late, lamented Fatman The Human Flying Saucer.

JOHN *You wrote a few samples of a CAPTAIN MARVEL newspaper strip, which never appeared, as well as sundry other syndicated strips. Which did you find easier to write — comic books or strips?*

ROD: Easier? Tut, man, you should know it's against the rules of the Writers Union to admit anything is easy. Writing strips has this advantage — that if you think up a good

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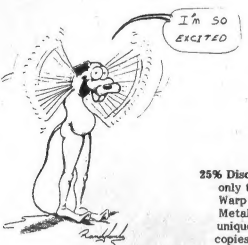

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"Bill Finger was the most admired writer."

1941 Fawcett © 1984 DC Comics, Inc

plot it can go on for three months, whereas a good plot for a comic book will be used up in eight or ten pages and then you must think up another.

JOHN: *It doesn't quite work that way in contemporary comics! When you started a newspaper strip, did you have any idea where the story was heading — or only a sketchy idea of the ending?*

ROD: At first, they asked for synopses and I sent them — but I still varied endings as (presumably) better ideas occurred to me. They soon quit asking for a synopsis. As an editor of comics, though, I always insisted that a writer should let me know how a story would end. Maybe I'm not as brave as the fellows at King Features Syndicate. Also, a comic-book story is tight — if scheduled for ten pages it must not run eleven, whereas a strip is open-ended and in theory could run on indefinitely.

JOHN: *Speaking of writing, did Bill Finger — noted Golden Age writer of BATMAN and GREEN LANTERN — ever work for Fawcett?*

ROD: One day, when I was pretty new in the comics department, editor **France Herron** said, "If a fellow named **Bill Finger** comes around and wants to write for us, hire him, even if he wants $10. a page." Since the going rate was $2.50 a page, that impressed me. It was the first time I ever heard of **Finger.**

Later, as I got better acquainted with the field, I knew that **Bill Finger** was the pro's pro, perhaps the most admired writer of all. Certainly, everybody held BATMAN in high esteem, far above SUPERMAN. **Herron** had been gone for a year or so when **Lyn Perkins** first introduced **Finger** to me. Bill had a briefcase full of plot ideas and the ones he showed me were ingenious. I gave him an assignment, probably a CAPTAIN MARVEL. A certain number of pages — say, 15 — was specified. He would accept our regular rate — $6 a page, by then — provided he could have a check as soon as he turned in the story. "OK," said I.

Fawcett had a cumbersome bookkeeping system and was notorious for slow pay. Through legerdemain, I managed to acquire a check made out to **Bill Finger** before he wrote the story. (The **Fawcett brothers** would have turned pale had they but known.) So the great BATMAN author brought in his script. It was dandy. But it was 16 pages and the payment was for only 15 pages. Oy! He was the outraged author. But I was the firm editor. I had gone to a lot of trouble to get him a fast check for the agreed number of pages, and if he wanted to donate an extra page that was his business, not mine. He departed grumbling but didn't tear up the check. As far as I know, that's the only time he wrote for Fawcett. I met him several times afterward and he was amiable, so there were no hard feelings.

Cover of WHIZ #22 (1941). Art by C.C. Beck.

JOHN: *Who was Lyn Perkins?*

ROD: Lyn was a Fawcett editor. His whole name was **Henry Avelyn Perkins.** We called him Henry but his pals outside the office called him Lyn. He was a dedicated student of the comics business with a keen sense of story and art.

JOHN: *It was common practice for Fawcett staffers' names to be used in the stories — Henry Perkins turned up as a villain's name in the lead story in CAPTAIN MARVEL ADVENTURES #63. In the Mary Marvel origin from CAPTAIN MARVEL ADVENTURES #18 — reprinted in DC's SHAZAM! #8 — Billy Batson, hosting a quiz program, reads a question from Tucky Reed. Any relation?*

ROD: I hadn' t remembered that, but I'm not surprised. My wife's kinfolk called her Edith, but everybody else addressed her as Tucky. Her Southern accent so impressed the natives of Buffalo, New York, that they began calling her "Kaintuck" and "Tucky" and she decided not to fight it. Tucky was tickled to see her name mentioned in the funnies.

JOHN: *Every comics pro considers some*

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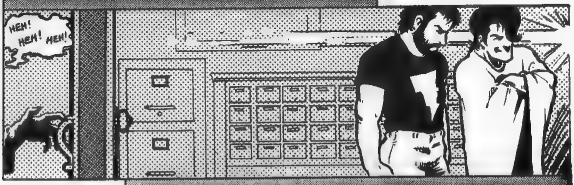

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of his colleagues to be favorites — who among the Fawcett crew were yours?

ROD: When praise is being passed around, **Bill Parker** is always shortchanged. All he did was to invent Captain Marvel, Billy Batson, Sivana, Shazam, and he was the editor of the first WHIZ. He created Ibis the Invincible, Golden Arrow, Spy Smasher, Scoop Smith, Lance O'Casey and Dan Dare. He may have written all the stuff for the first few issues of WHIZ, as I was the first "outsider" after him to do a Captain Marvel script.

JOHN: *The Golden Arrow character who ran in WHIZ COMICS seems rather dull, lacking concepts such as a secret past, a mask,* **et cetera.**

ROD: Your appraisal of the Golden Arrow character is probably sound. A secret past like the Lone Ranger, and a mask, may have made him a more formidable character. However, your viewpoint is that of a historian of comics. Consider the dilemma of **Bill Parker,** who was asked to create six or seven characters for a brand-new comic book. I was not present at the time, so I'm only speculating: Suppose the bosses told him, "We want a western hero — but he should NOT be like the Lone Ranger." Okay. No mask. No silver bullets. No Tonto. I doubt that the combined genius of **Pierce, Bridwell** and **Reed** could have produced such a good WHIZ on such short notice.

Man of Steel and Big Red Cheese patch up old differences for the cover of DC's SHAZAM! #1 (1972).

JOHN: *No argument there.*

ROD: It occurs to me that **Al Allard** has also been given short shrift in the hoopla about Fawcett's Golden Days. He was the art director, in charge of that young bullpen of geniuses. Al was a quiet, low-key man, but he was always in the conference when a cover was okayed. He decided which guys to hire. We had to get his approval before a freelance artist's pay was raised.

JOHN: *Can you tell us a little bit about why you left staff?*

ROD: I did enjoy being a Fawcett editor. Great, wonderful place to work and fine people to work with. **Ralph Daigh,** my immediate boss, was and is a fine gentleman. The **Fawcett brothers** were amiable and — *wow!* — were there lots of beautiful girls in the organization! When I bowed out, the U.S. government had put a freeze on pay raises and I knew I could make more money as a freelance writer than as an editor.

JOHN: *In addition to Captain Marvel and Captain Marvel, Junior, what other Fawcett features did you script?*

ROD: Let's see — Spy Smasher, Bullet-

"The government put a freeze on pay raises.

Al Allard, Fawcett art director for 42 years.

man, Mr. Scarlet, Marvel Bunny, Gabby Hayes are some others I recall offhand.

JOHN: *Are you personally acquainted with any of the DC staff which was involved in the revival of Captain Marvel?*

ROD: Aside from Kurt, the only DC fellow I know except to nod to is **Julie Schwartz.** Though our paths crossed sometimes in comics, I look on him fondly as a fellow jazz fan. One of his star writers (and one of mine), **John Broome,** was similarly inclined. We used to go together to jam sessions at Town Hall. We had record bashes. Last time I saw Julie, he said he had quit listening to his discs. Sad.

JOHN: *Did you know that DC revived the city-visiting routine for Captain Marvel, for a while?*

ROD: That interests me since, strangely, I'm the one who thought up the city gimmick and persuaded the brass it would be a circulation builder. I wrote the prototype story, which was about Buffalo, New York. No research was necessary, as I had been a newspaperman there. As the series developed, a distributor in each town would provide us with data as to the leading citizens, unusual sights, principal streets, main industry and anything else that might serve as background.

JOHN: *Nelson Bridwell mentions in the letter column of SHAZAM! #33 that several of the early city-visiting stories of the 1940s were written by Robert Kanigher. Do you know him?*

ROD: The name **Kanigher** does not ring a bell. Put that down to (a) faulty memory, or (b) I never heard of him.

JOHN: *Your Buffalo story appeared in CAPTAIN MARVEL ADVENTURES #31, with Will Lieberson listed as executive editor. I presume this means that it was published after you left Fawcett as editor.*

ROD: If Will was listed as executive editor, it means that the issue was produced after I left Fawcett. Will succeeded me. As for the order in which the stories appeared, no doubt the circulation department had its reasons. Of course, it's not rare for a story to get into print months after it's written.True, it was against the rules for an editor to write — but it didn't apply in this particular case, because I did it as part of my job on company time and did not get paid for it beyond my regular salary. The rest of the city stories, of course, were done by freelancers like **Otto Binder, Bill Woolfolk** and **Joe Millard,** who were paid their usual rates.

JOHN: *Why weren't editors allowed to write stories?*

ROD: Regarding the Fawcett rule that editors should not buy anything from themselves, think it over — from a writer's viewpoint. You'll see it's a good rule.

JOHN: *What did you think of Republic's 1941 ADVENTURES OF CAPTAIN MARVEL movie serial?*

ROD: Frankly, I don't remember that much about the Republic serial, but I expect it must have been better than TV's SHAZAM! of the mid-Seventies, which showed the Big Red Cheese grunting and puffing to do such a simple thing as lifting up an automobile.

JOHN: *Did you see a Hanna-Barbera special called THE CHALLENGE, which featured Captain Marvel and other heroes?*

ROD: Yes, we did catch THE CHALLENGE and found it mildly amusing. Missed the ROAST sequel. Saw a movie around that time that I considered hilarious, SUPPORT YOUR LOCAL SHERIFF. **James Garner** is cast in a role that suits his old MAVERICK style. Incidentally, MAVERICK was a big favorite — well-written, well-directed, well-acted

JOHN: *I agree. I liked MAVERICK, too.*

ROD: Delighted to meet another MAVERICK fan. Perhaps you recall an episode in which **Garner** spent the entire hour sitting relaxed on a chair in front of a building on the wooden sidewalk. He maneuvered the whole plot with brainwork and guile. We

I could make more as a writer than an editor."

shall not see the like of such work again very soon, I fear, for writers have learned it is easier to put in violence and a chase than to think — and the ratings don't suffer. Ah, well, this is not new. We had a comics writer who, getting paid by the page, would try to fatten his script by starting a fight between hero and villain. Next page, "more fight." Next page, "continue fight," *et cetera.*

Some of the guys like **Millard, Binder, Woolfolk, Broome** and others would strain a gut to create an ingenious plot. Others took short cuts.

After I had ceased to be editor, I noted a dilly of a locked room- mystery. The hero had been shoved into a sturdy cabin, the front door was padlocked, the windows were barred, the chimney was too narrow for escape. How did he get out. By the back door — somebody forgot to lock it! I confronted **Wendell Crowley** with this (it was not in one of his books, by the way). He was a bonafide editor. Some others who bore the title were not. He shrugged his shoulders. "You would never let me get away with something like this," said I, referring to the unlocked back door. "Right," said he. "When your hero gets in a jam, have the villains tie him up with rotten rope."

JOHN: *Stan Lee liked long fights.*

ROD: Interesting that he believes in long fights. The late **Ed Herron** liked them, especially in scripts he wrote himself. They may be effective or not — but they are certainly a boon to the writer who is getting paid by the page and doesn't want to think too much!

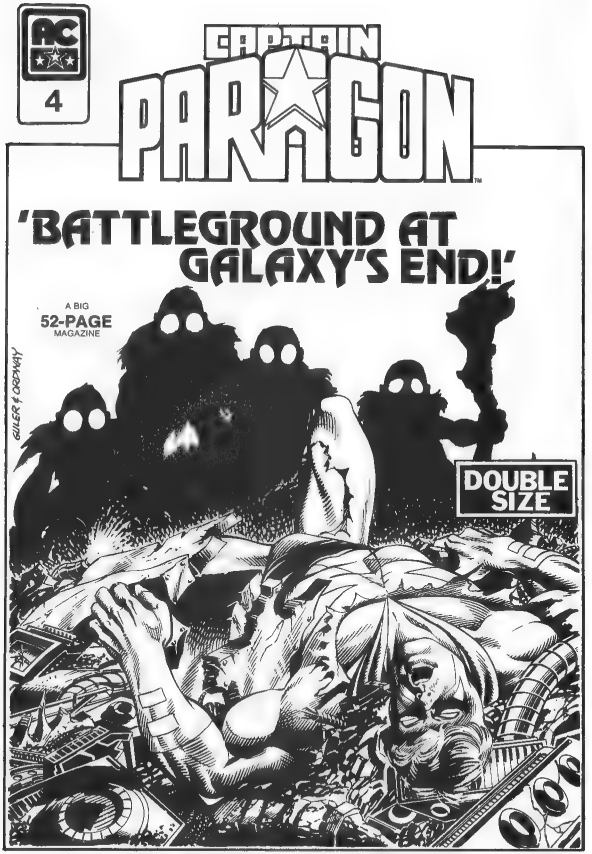
JOHN: *Of course, to set the record straight, Stan did a lot of good things, too. C.C. Beck particularly admires him for bringing some humor and originality back into comics.*

ROD: Ed Robbins, a former Fawcett artist, was on the phone recently and he declared Stan did a lot of good things for artists and writers.

JOHN: *Getting back to the Golden Age of Comics, are there any other comments you would care to add or opinions to express?*

Some classic Fawcett characters from the cover of AMERICA'S GREATEST COMICS #1 (1941): Minute-Man, Bulletman, Captain Marvel, Spy Smasher, Mr. Scarlet. Art by Mac Raboy.

1941 Fawcett 1984 DC Comics, Inc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4
CAPTAIN
PARAGON
'BATTLEGROUND AT GALAXY'S END!'
A BIG
52-PAGE
MAGAZINE
DOUBLE SIZE
GILBERT O'CONNAY

"I was not enlightened about homosexuality and lesbianism. I was the Anita Bryant of my time."

© 1942 Fawcett

ROD: I'm flattered that you ask, but the petrified truth is you know more about the characters than I do. We who worked in those vineyards didn't know it was a Golden Age or we'd have made notes. One thing I do remember is that during my tenure we never copied Superman. One time somebody had a character in a funny filler saying, "Is it a boid. Is it a plane?" The top brass said this was a no-no and made us take it out. It was stressed that there should not be even a kidding reference to anything Supermanly. On the other hand, artist **Mac Raboy** showed me a Superman newspaper strip where Supes' figure was copied so exactly from **Raboy**'s Captain Marvel, Junior, that it could have been a photostat. Mac said it wasn't the first time he'd noted such swipes.

JOHN: *What about the opening scene of the Captain Marvel story from AMERICA'S GREATEST COMICS #7, where the phrase, "Is it a bird. Is it a plane?" is used?*

ROD: You constantly amaze me with your knowledge of minute details about the glorious past. I knew nothing about this. Maybe some legal beagle spotted that and advised the brass to aovid the phrase in the future. It's a fact that you fanzine fellows are hip to a lot of things I either don't remember or didn't know about in the first place. The fact is that we were so busy meeting deadlines — I had 25 titles at one time — that individual items kind of skipped by us. As a young reporter interviewing cinema queens, Broadway stars, famous athletes, visiting authors, band leaders and comedians, I was often amazed to find I was more informed in some areas of their business than they were. "How could this be?" I wondered. Stupidity. Ignorance. Later, I realized that a fan has a much better chance of observing the whole scene than does the participant. The latter is much too busy to know much of what's going on around him.

Since you mentioned SHAZAM! #8 earlier, of special interest to me was the letters page, in which you and others discussed the powers of Mary Marvel and the various gods or non-gods who made up her SHAZAM. Good grief, I didn't know y'all cared! Up to then, all I could recall about the creation of Mary was that Marc Swayze made her first portraits and they appeared as beautiful covers on the first several issues. But now I'm reminded of something — and here's a scoop. **Selena** represents the first letter in Mary's SHAZAM, right. Well, man, the original was **Sappho**! I killed her. I was not then enlightened about the healthful effects of homosexuality and lesbianism. In a small way, I was the Anita **Bryant** of my time. But I said, "Ol' **Sappho** must go," and that's how **Selena** got in **Roger Fawcett** may never have forgiven me for our loss of circulation among the dykes!

ONE BRIGHT MORNING THE BLASÉ CITY FOLK ARE STARTLED OUT OF THEIR USUAL BOREDOM!
HEY! WHAT'S THAT?
IS IT A BIRD?
IS IT A PLANE?
NO! HE'S ADVERTISING SOMETHING!

A somewhat prophetic panel from the splash page of "Capt. Marvel and the World of Your Tomorrow," in AMERICA'S GREATEST COMICS #7.

Artist C.C. Beck and W.H. Fawcett, Jr., president of Fawcett Publications, conferring on a cover.

"If you had to pick one word to describe

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SCOTT McCLOUD

Eclipse publisher Dean Mullaney makes quite a persuasive case: "Another good interview (particularly because he's so goddamn intelligent and articulate), is Scott McCloud, who writes and draws ZOT! Not only is the book an incredible breath of fresh air, but Scott is in FULL CONTROL of what he's doing. It's all there for a reason, folks. He reminds me somewhat of Craig Russell. When you discuss Craig's work with him, he can sit down and tell you why he did every little bit on the page. It's all there for a reason, and none of it is accidental or 'intuitive.' The same goes for Scott. It's all deliberate and planned out. Once you get to the second and third issues, wherein the 'second level' meaning has to do with representational art versus symbolism and abstract visuals...you know that this is NOT just a kids' book."

So one fine Saturday, Jim Salicrup–with Kurt Busiek acting as interface, and the "legendary Brian Dewan" in attendance–spoke at length with Scott of ZOT!...

VITAL STATISTICS

Name: Scott McCloud
Occupation: Comic-book writer/artist (though I really like Spiegleman's term, "Picture-Writer.")
Residence: Tarrytown, NY
Born: 10 June 1960 — Lexington, Massachusetts, Birthplace of American Liberty.
Credits: ZOT! . . Just ZOT!. . . nothing but ZOT!.
Training: B.A. in illustration, Syracuse University.
Pet Peeve: People who act like robots (*real* robots I can take).
Unrealized Ambition: To design a miniature golf course.
Top Ten: (1) Tezuka, Osama; (2) Kirby, Jack; (3) Herge; (4) McLuhan, Marshall; (5) Shakespeare, William; (6) Disney, Walt; (7) Bach, Johann S.; (8) Jung, Carl; (9) Ernst, Max; (10) Moose, Bullwinkle, the.
Greatest Fear: Grown-ups.

JIM SALICRUP: *Here's one that's not on your vital statistics: What's your favorite color?*

SCOTT McCLOUD: Blue.

JIM: *Which blue?*

SCOTT: The blue end of the spectrum, that's all. Any number of blues I like. What can I tell you, it was a conservative family. Blue is America's favorite color.

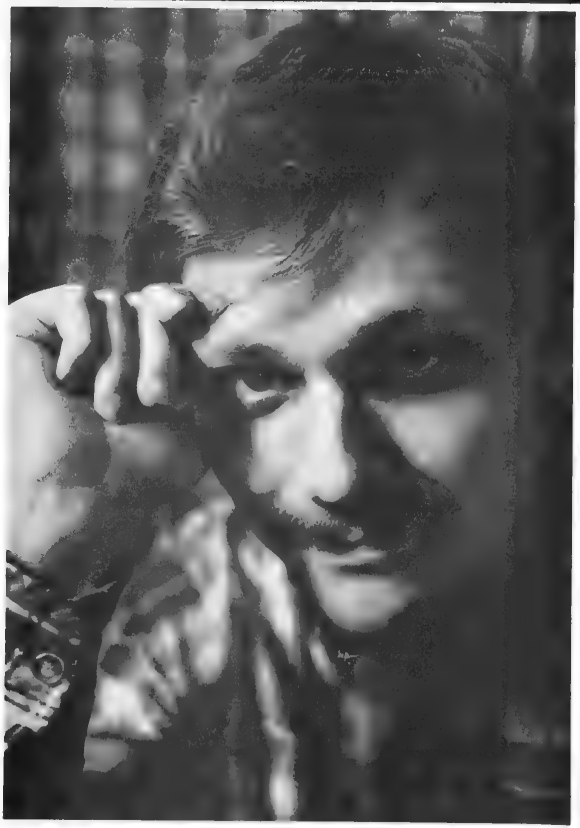
JIM: *Tell us what you think of where you were born. . .*

SCOTT: Okay. I grew up in Lexington, Massachusetts — Birthplace of American Liberty. Lexington's a nice little Massachusetts town, which means that it was full of liberals, and I grew up in a conservative family, so that was good education for me. And I was always drawing, listening to music, and doing all sorts of strange creative things with strange creative friends — two of whom are here.

JIM: *And they are. . .*

SCOTT: **Kurt Busiek** and the legendary **Brian Dewan**. Kurt introduced me to comic books in junior high, by the way.

ZOT!, 'hope' seems to cover all the bases."



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Available from: Andromeda, Bud Plant, Capital City, Comics Unlimited, Diamond, Glenwood, Longhorn, Multi-Book, Second Genesis, Styx, Titan, and other fine distributors (farewell Pacific, we'll miss you!).

"There's a million ways to use the medium."

JIM: *Is that true?*

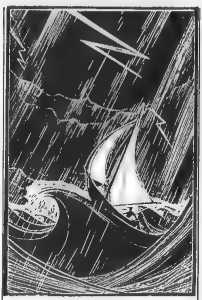
KURT BUSIEK: Yes. I had recently begun reading comics and I had collected the complete set of the original X-MEN, and I loaned them to Scott one summer, and he took them home to read them, and by the end of the summer, he was a comic-book fan.

JIM: *What made you stick with these comic books? What did you think of them?*

SCOTT: Well, I thought they had a lot of potential. It's funny — I was about 14 years old at the time, and I never read them before, because they looked very childish. *(Laughter.)* But at 14 I had *grown down* enough, I guess, to appreciate them. I was weaned on books like the **Steranko** and **Adams** X-MEN, and the **Colan** DAREDEVIL, and about the same time I became interested in them as a fan, I was already getting some ideas on how comics could be used as a creative medium, and I quickly got this notion that I could do it myself and maybe better than some of them, though that remains to be seen . . .

JIM: *You mentioned that it was a creative medium. What do you think about comics?*

SCOTT: *(Laughter.)* Big question! Well, they are a medium, not a *genre*. One of the biggest problems is this notion — a lot of people have it — that there's some unwritten rule that comics have to be about a certain set of subjects, and have to be done in a certain way.



Some "comics" you may not know about. Above: Lynd Ward's GOD'S MAN.

JIM: *For example?*

SCOTT: Well, they'll say they have to include either super-heroes or funny animals, for instance, or they'll assume comics have to be done in a sensational style — they have to be in color, they have to be bound a certain way. There are people who take the attitude that, if it can stand up on one end, it's not a comic book; if it's in black and white, it's not a comic book; if it's not a certain size, it's not a comic book . . . It's such a shame, because there's a million ways that you can use the medium — at least a million . . .

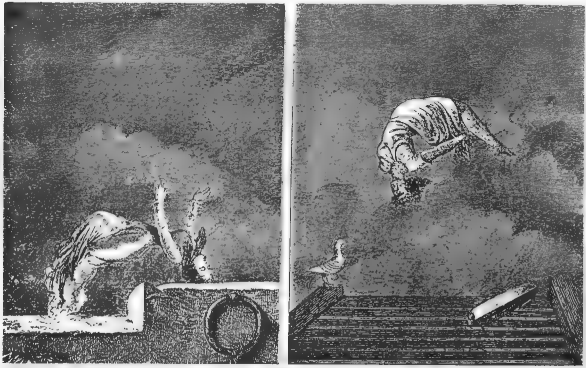
KURT: Not *exactly* a million . . . *(Laughter.)*

SCOTT: One comic book I rediscovered last month was **Max Ernst**'s surreal collage novel, A WEEK OF KINDNESS, (or *Une Semaine de Bonte*, if you want to impress the faculty). And it's just a series of images, in sequence, which are very surreal, have no words, but tell a kind of story, and the deliberate combination of those images and their chosen sequence, makes it a comic, I think. Really, a comic is any set of sequential images meant to be taken as a whole, and there's just so many things that fit that definition that we don't ordinarily think of as comics. The **Ernst** novel is one, pre-Columbian manuscripts are another example . . . maybe Egyptian hieroglyphics.

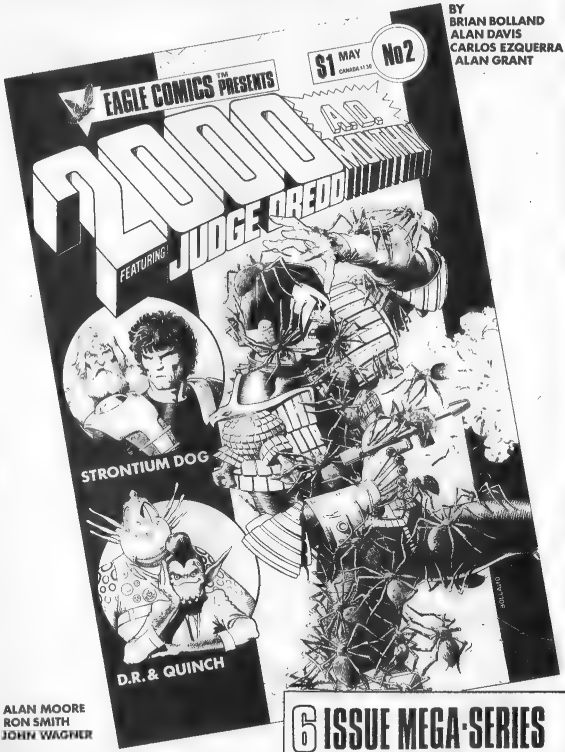
JIM: *Well, do you think the problem is with the artist or more with the people who are just trying to sell comics as they exist now?*

SCOTT: Well, I know that the realitites of

Two "panels" from Max Ernst's surreal collage-novel, A WEEK OF KINDNESS.



ON SALE IN JANUARY... THE TITLE THAT CHANGED BRITISH COMIC BOOK HISTORY!



6 ISSUE MEGA-SERIES

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"ZOT!'s in the Kirby tradition."

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the *business* have a lot to do with it, that's a given. It's that way in every medium, in movies, in theatre, in book publishing, but I don't think that's the only problem. That's one that we'll always have to deal with, but I think the problem also lies with a lot of the people who make comics, who just assume you have to make them the way they've always been made. And I'm no revolutionary. It surprises me to hear people talk about ZOT! as something unprecedented, or way off in left field. From where I sit, it's status quo. It's something in the **Kirby** tradition. That isn't necessarily bad, but I think we could use a little perspective. Even *today*, almost every comic on the stands owes more to **Kirby** than anyone else. We're still in that tradition.

JIM: *Well, are there any artists working today that are doing things that break away from the norm that you find interesting?*

SCOTT: Oh, sure. In the standard color comic-book field, there's some. I'm with the consensus on AMERICAN FLAGG! and THOR, for example. I like GROO, MR. X, CROSSFIRE, NEXUS, maybe a half-dozen others. Moving a little further into left field, I enjoy LOVE AND ROCKETS, of course — I'm sure Fantagraphics would appreciate the "of course." *(Laughter.)*

KURT: The COMICS JOURNAL currently lists LOVE AND ROCKETS as the magazine all the professionals read, don't they?

SCOTT: Yeah, I think that's going a bit far.

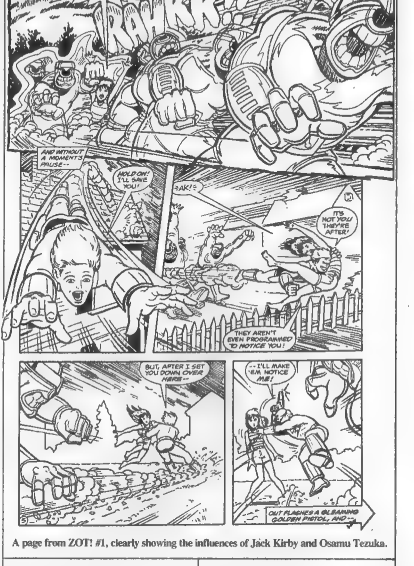
KURT: *All* of them.

SCOTT: Even the dead ones. Even the letterer who lives in Miami, who only letters a couple of Archie titles, he reads LOVE AND ROCKETS — sure. I kind of wish every professional in the business *did* read LOVE AND ROCKETS, but I'm not gonna bank on it. Anyway, I'm also very interested in the mini-comics scene, which I better get back to, because there's a whole 'nother story right there. I read everything that comes out from Aardvark-Vanaheim. I don't entirely know why, I just like the *diversity*, I guess. Or maybe I'm just twisted because I *love* FLAMING CARROT! It's one of the funniest books on the stands. It's getting some bad press, but it's really very good in it's own awful way.

JIM: *The publisher of COMICS INTERVIEW had a letter in the latest issue!*

SCOTT: Yep. Right, I read that. Really, there is a lot of good stuff coming out, and a lot of bad stuff, and you can see the glass as half empty or half full. It's up to you. A lot of people who say that comic books have really gone downhill are saying it because, to them, "comic books" equals Marvel comic books, or Marvel and DC, and they just refuse to look anywhere else. Not only has the *number* of titles increased in the last few years, but so has the variety and originality of the concepts, even if the execution's kind of raw. A lot more people are breaking new ground now. There are many more writer-artists who are willing to take their books in directions nobody would have dared to take just three years ago. In fact, I made myself a list of all of the writer-artists in comics today — that is, comics that were really the brainchild of one person — **Sergio Aragones**, **Wendy Pini** — and then I thought back to three years ago, and not even a *third* of them were making their own comics. That's just three years ago!

JIM: *Tell me some other comics you like.*


YAAAAA!!
TOO LATE! SHE'LL BE CRAMPED NOW, UNLESS
AND WITHOUT A MOMENT'S PAUSE--
HOLD ON! I'LL SAVE YOU!
KAK!?
IT'S NOT YOU I WORRIED ABOUT!
THEY AREN'T EVEN PROGRAMMED TO NOTICE YOU!
BUT, AFTER I SET YOU DOWN OVER HERE--
--I'LL MAKE 'EM NOTICE ME!
OUT FLASHES A BLAZING GOLDEN PISTOL, AND--

A page from ZOT! #1, clearly showing the influences of Jack Kirby and Osamu Tezuka.

SCOTT: *(Whistles.)* There's so many. First of all, I want to say, for all those artists reading this whom I leave out, *you're* the best. *(Laughter.)* It's because I love you so much that I forgot you. Well, for me there are three major comic-book markets, worldwide. The Japanese market, the European market, and the American market. There are others, but for me those represent the three most basic attitudes about comics. In Japan, it's an attitude that grows out of **Osamu Tezuka**'s ideas, and all of them have more or less sprung from that. It's like a tree, and **Tezuca** is the trunk. In Europe, it springs from an attitude which I think was probably promoted most by **Herge**, but I'm told

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"The Japanese have powerful storytelling."

that **Franquin**, whom I don't know as well, may have been just as influential. And that's a whole approach that's geared towards *world-making*. Most of Europe's biggest names — **Tardi**, **Moebius**, **Cristin** and **Mezieres**, **Uderzo** — have this sensitivity constructing worlds, architecture and such. European comics also tend to have that fine art sensibility that's really exciting. In America, we're much more scattered. We come from a lot of different traditions. It's very pluralistic. It's very *American*, in a lot of ways, I guess. Our comics' history is a real melting pot compared to Japan.

JIM: *Well, you know, I've been reading MANGA MANGA—*

SCOTT: **Frederick Schodt**'s *wonderful* book about Japanese comics!

JIM: *I haven't finished it yet, but one of the things that was surprising to me was how much of this real scatalogical subject matter there was, how they wrote about the farting contests, and how one of the titles was called Shit Comics.*

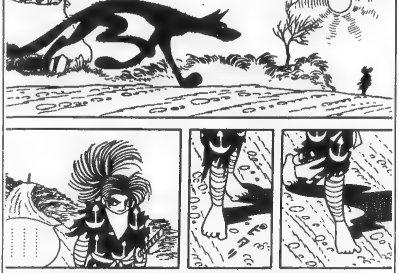
SCOTT: It's pretty shocking, yeah.

JIM: *A lot of things surprised me. One was the emphasis on storytelling, where the book could be read very quickly. I think each page was designed to be read in three-and-a-half seconds. I mentioned it to Frank Miller — said I was surprised by the stuff I was looking at — and he said, well, the stuff* he *was influenced by is the best stuff. The rest isn't any good.*

SCOTT: Okay, I've got a bone to pick with Frank on that.

JIM: *I may have misrepresented him.*

SCOTT: Well, no, I wouldn't be too surprised if he said that. I know that I mentioned **Osamu Tezuka** to Frank once and he just said, "I don't look at that big-foot stuff." Frank's main influence from Japan is a school of samurai comics, and in particular, **Gozeki Kojima**'s work on WOLF AND CHILD, which is a tremendous comic. I have a couple of volumes, and they are very, very good, but they're also very *American*, compared to most of what goes on in Japan. Yet even WOLF AND CHILD can be traced back to **Tezuka** through a man named **Sampei Shirato**, whose work is a direct result of **Tesuka**'s influence, and you really can see, even though it's a big jump from **Tezuka** to WOLF AND CHILD, that there's a smooth transition there — trunk to branch, branch to twig, so to speak. But the Japanese comics that I've found more interesting, really, and more important for us to understand, are a lot simpler than WOLF AND CHILD in execution, and they tend to deal with fairly simple subjects — kids falling in love, science-fiction stories, war stories, crime stories — but what's happening *between* the panels is just fantastic. The Japanese have developed some powerful storytelling techniques which rely on a kind of reader participation and a sense of involvement that WOLF AND CHILD doesn't really generate as much.

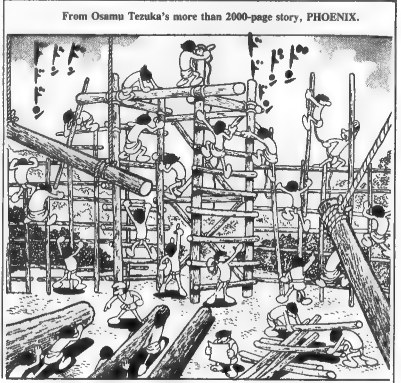


From Osamu Tezuka's 800-page Samurai story, DORORO.

JIM: *How would you describe what happens "between the panels"?*

SCOTT: Well, one thing that the Japanese do that we don't is use a lot of space just setting the mood. Sometimes, they'll introduce you to the scene by way of five or six disjointed images from that scene, and by putting them together in your mind, you've drawn their establishing shot for them. You're a part of it.

From Osamu Tezuka's more than 2000-page story, PHOENIX.



© 1984 Osamu Tezuka
© 1984 Osamu Tezuka

"AMERICAN FLAGG proved to fandom there

Scott...

JIM: *I think the closest American example is the CAPTAIN AMERICA Steranko splash page at the arcade or something.*

SCOTT: All right, a good example that has some of the Japanese attitude in it.

JIM: *What was that book you were showing me, Kurt...*

KURT: That was FATHER AND SON by **Norio Hayasi** and **Yasuiti Osima**.

SCOTT: FATHER AND SON is like a kind of "Shonen Street Blues" because there's a whole diverse cast of characters who all happen to be cops. Great stuff.

JIM: *What I liked when I was just flipping through was the establishing shots, or more just the backgrounds. When they showed a building, it looked like a real building which, to me, makes the stories look more interesting — whereas a lot of the current American artists like to look at backgrounds as horrible, evil necessities, that they have to throw in.*

SCOTT: What you're saying is that it's a reversal of the American attitude, which places all of the emphasis on the faces and figures, and deemphasizes the environment, which sounds reasonable at first, since most people tend to look at faces and figures more often. People look at the people, right? But the reason I think it's a mistake for an *artist* to go in and render the figures and faces so much is because your readers have tons of previous experience which allows them to complete those characters. You don't need to give them much for them to know how a person works, how he's put together. A nose can be just a single line, and they'll know it's a nose, but the environments, the architecture and surroundings and special effects, are things that the arrtist *does* need to give you, because you're not going to fill those in by yourself. You've never been in these places. Japanese comics sometimes take an almost photographic attitude towards the backgrounds, and leave the characters as just incredibly simple drawings so that the reader can step inside those and fill in the character, fill in his shoes, and walk around in that rendered environment. They're creating a kind of template for reader participaton. It all sounds so esoteric, but it's really not. It's just good comics, that's all. And it makes for good reading.

JIM: *I know when I go back to those Dr. Seuss beginner readers, it was all sort of surreal and simplistic, and there's one book that sticks with me — it's not even a very good book — called THE BIG HONEY HUNT, or something like that, with bears. To me it was almost Eisner-like, in that you would see the city of trees that these bears lived in, and it was almost like a map in a way, a map of Disneyland. You could imagine where someone could go around this corner and come out over here, and Eisner had splash pages like that, which were all just background. When I was editing at Marvel, I would take splash pages around to get the indicias approved by the legal department, and people who weren't comic-book fans but who worked there usually reacted to the pages that I like the most, such as a John Byrne FANTASTIC FOUR page which was just a girl's bedroom, but it had all this detail and stuff, and they stopped to look at it, and said, "Hey, what is this book? It looks more interesting."*

SCOTT: It was something relevant to their own experience.

JIM: *What was your first contact with Japanese comics?*

SCOTT: The first two Japanese comics I ever saw were one of **Tezuka**'s PHOENIX series, and one called 750 RIDER, which was a motorcycle adventure. And my very first thought upon looking at PHOENIX

are more than two comic-book companies."

was, "Hey, this reminds me of ELFQUEST." As it turned out, **Wendy Pini** was very influenced by **Tezuka** at that point. I think I've even found the source for Rayek — I'll have to ask her about that. And the thing which I like the most about them was that they were obviously concerned with telling a story, more than showing off their wonderful technique. Even though the technique was wonderful in its way, that wasn't the *purpose* of the comic. It wasn't something that you'd hang up on your wall, it was something that you'd read, and read again and again. I hate to see people judging comic-book artwork solely on the basis of how the page looks when held out of context, or even worse, how the *original page* looked, which is almost completely irrelevant, especially in a color comic, because the thing goes through so many changes, and to judge it solely on the basis of the original can cause a lot of problems down the line, especially when people base their whole approach on it.

JIM: *Now I notice on your wall you have the poster from the Comic Art Show at New York's Whitney Museum. When you mentioned how people judge pages out of context, and how they look at the original, what struck me about that show — and I think I was the only one at a comics company to comment on it, as I did in MARVEL AGE — was how none of that material was designed to be framed and hung in a gallery, and to see a lot of people coming in and reading everything... What did you think of the show, by the way? Were you there?*

SCOTT: Yeah, and I'm glad they put it together. One of the most interesting things about it for me was just the very fact that the JOURNAL crew had been asked by somebody to organize it, which could be seen as legitimatizing their role as "comics' critical journal," which some people have disputed.

JIM: *I didn't like the building they had the show in — some sort of government building — and I was there for the opening, so it was real crowded, too.*

SCOTT: It wasn't too crowded when when we were there, and the architecture didn't bug me much, but I know what you're talking when you say that most of these works weren't designed for gallery display. I just think it's important to present comics in a gallery context, at least as a statement of our pride in the medium.

JIM: *Well, that's why I was criticizing it, actually. The whole show seemed to say, "See, we can be in a gallery, and if it's in a gallery it must be good."*

SCOTT: Oh sure, that's dumb. I'll agree with you there. But it's still worth it to make the statement. We don't have to lose our pride in *our* way of presenting comics, which is still the best way to do it. I just think it's helpful to get some "official" acknowledgement of them as a form, just like

...and Zot!

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DONALD SIMPSON '84
SO MUCH FOR A HOUSE STYLE!

"The Japanese are the best storytellers."

it was important that movies be acknowledged critically in much the same way books were, up to that point. Every new medium has to be legitimatized. Comics have suffered a longer period of having that illegitimate label stuck on them.

JIM: *Well, yeah, but I don't think having it at that museum made any difference.*

SCOTT: Every little bit helps. I'm glad they did it. Besides, they showed some good cartoons. *(Laughter.)*

JIM: *Is there anything else you would like to say about the Whitney show?*

SCOTT: Just that. I'm glad it was done. And I'm glad they gave me a poster, because I love KRAZY KAT and that's a terrific Sunday strip.

JIM: *Along the same lines, actually, what do you think could happen to change the way comics are perceived?*

SCOTT: Things are happening all the time that we have no control over. Public perception is just so volatile, and you never know what's going to affect it. I think the most important thing now is diversification, and we're getting that. Thank God for Aardvark-Vanaheim, no matter what you think of the books —

JIM: *I like them.*

SCOTT: No, not you personally. *(Laughter.)* I mean you out there in Magazineland — at least we're getting diversity in approaches, and also we've broken the stigma of the "Big Two" with AMERICAN FLAGG, which did us all a favor by proving to fandom at large that there are more than two comic-book companies. Even now a lot of fans think there are only three. Or only *two* if they jump from Marvel to First and skip DC. The truth is there are hundreds of ways to get comic books. You can even fish out an Underground now and then. And you can find comic books produced in other countries that aren't in English but are plenty readable. I read Japanese comics all the time, and very few of them are in English, buT the language of comics is universal and there's a lot you can get out of them, at least if you're looking from an aesthetic standpoint. Obviously, if you're just out for an easy read, you might not want to pick up LIEUTENANT BLUEBERRY in French.

JIM: *R. C. Harvey said in the COMICS JOURNAL that one of his ways to judge comics is that if you can just look at the pictures, and understand the story, it's failed. If you can just read the copy, and the pictures don't help, then it's failed as well. He says that for a comic to be successful, it has to be both of them working together.*

SCOTT: So, what he's saying is that if half of the book is superfluous, if you can toss out the words or the pictures and it wouldn't matter, then something's wrong. I'd agree

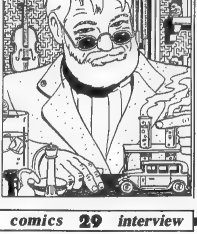
One of Osamu Tezuka's sequences, cited by Scott as an example of Japanese comics' marriage of word and picture. From ASTROBOY, Volume XIII.

with that. And sure, I'd get more out of Japanese comics if they were in English. But there's still a lot worth looking at.

JIM: *Have you read any translations?*

SCOTT: Yes, I have. They're real good, too. But the Japanese are such *visual* storytellers that you can get the bulk of the story from the pictures alone. The words give you important information, but not always vital, especially in terms of the dramatic progress of the story. That's in the pictures, because the body language and the expression work is so sharp. Japanese comics tend to have straightforward, almost simplistic scripting. And a very simple art style. I think that's one of the reasons it's so successful — because prose is an involving medium that needs to be *perceived.* You need to decipher it, essentially. A page of text is something that you can't just glance at and get all at once. Whereas a fully rendered face is something that you *receive.* It's non-involving, something that is just presented to you, and there's no work involved. The Japanese artists, who are working in a medium of words *and* pictures, have brought those two closer together. The words are less involving. They take less deciphering. A word balloon in a Japanese comic is usually something simple. 'Ah! He got hit by a truck!' You can see that at a glance. Whereas the drawings are very much like words themselves, in that they're just a collection of lines that represent something in a very iconic way, and they function as words, as "characters," in the sense of a letter being a "character." The ultimate example is in one of Tezuka's comics, where somebody shouts so loudly that the word balloon is just four or five huge bold black characters. And just below it are some of his people-characters, gesturing in silhouette, and they look just like the letters. It's this tradition of bringing the two together that gives Japanese comics that real *unified* feeling. You don't switch from one side of the brain to the other while reading them, like you do with most super-hero comics. There's a sense that pictures and words are just two ways of achieving the same goal:

Zot's bizarre Uncle Max — and yet another appearance of the selfsame wave seen elsewhere in this issue.



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"Zot *is* a super-hero."

Characters © 1984 McC

storytelling. Reading a Japanese comic is closest of any style of comics I've known to just going through the experience of the story. They're very involving, and in that sense, I think that the Japanese are, on the whole, the best storytellers we have. But, the European school of comics and the American tradition of comics are just as important. The Americans, mostly because of our history of — I want to say "freedom," but it sounds too corny — how about "independence"? There's more independence in American comics, historically, despite all the crap. And even today, anybody who's smart enough can come up with a totally different concept that has nothing to do with what came before and make it stick, provided he doesn't expect instant success. It's more likely that they could make it stick here than in Europe where they're getting a bit snotty, I think, despite all their accomplishments. That "fine art" sensibility is beginning to work against them now, and they don't seem to loosen up as much as they used to. And in Japan, the tradition is so strong, so powerful, and the business is so successful, that it's pretty difficult to break away. You have to go on with the tradition. Also, in Japan there's an additional problem in that there's a teacher-student relationship which apparently — I'm not sure, but apparently — affects just about any professional where you're expected to be apprenticed in some way, if not directly then at least in terms of your influences. You're expected to follow in the footsteps of someone. I'm really glad that *isn't* the tradition in America. It's the business tradition, but it's not the *cultural* tradition.

JIM: *Plan to go to Japan someday?*

SCOTT: I'd like to, but when I got there I would just go to the nearest Japanese bookstore and do there what I do in New York all the time. *(Laughter.)* I'd like to meet **Tezuka** someday. I hope he'll come to The States some time so I can intercept him. He's seen ZOT!, which is exciting for me. A Japanese friend of **Cat Yronwode**'s sent him the first four issues of ZOT!, including my article *about* him, and he reportedly enjoyed them and would like to see more. Wasn't too specific, but just the fact that he saw them at all was great news for me.

JIM: *Now, when we last left off, Kurt had just introduced you to comics. You liked them. What happened next?*

SCOTT: One summer afternoon, I made the decision that I was going to be a comic-book artist — this was the summer after tenth grade — and about two months later I started to plan this whole strategy for revolutionizing the medium. *(Laughter.)* I think ahead. It should all get done in about thirty years, according to my schedule here. But, going back to 1976 —

JIM: *The Bicentennial year.*

SCOTT: Yes, which in Lexington, Massachusetts — Birthplace of American Liberty, was quite an event indeed. So we did a comic book called THE BATTLE OF LEXINGTON, which took us two years. Kurt wrote, we co-plotted, and I did the artwork. It was in full pencil-drawings and it ran for 60 pages.

KURT: A more mindless piece of comics, it would be hard to find.

SCOTT: Yes, it's pretty dumb —

KURT: Five Marvel characters beat the hell out of five other Marvel characters in our hometown.

SCOTT: But we get to destroy our school and a lot of the town in the process So that was a lot of fun . . .

THE LEGENDARY BRIAN DEWAN: *(Laughter.)*

SCOTT: That's **The Legendary Brian Dewan** laughing. It was a lot of fun, and in the course of that 60 pages, we both progressed an awful lot. In fact, the last 20 pages weren't all that bad. One of the reasons it's fun for me to go back and look at THE BATTLE OF LEXINGTON now is because the thing is fully rendered. As a kid, I —

KURT: Do you have any pages here?

SCOTT: Yeah, but it won't help the readers any. *(Gets up to find pages.)* That's a suspended sentence. I'll be back.

KURT: Suspended sentence!

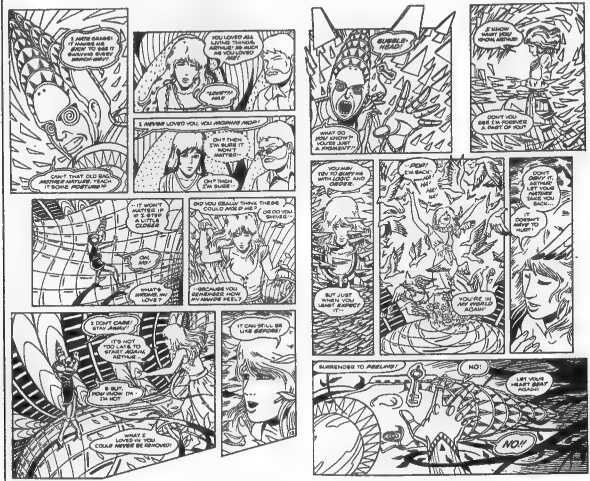
SCOTT: *(Returning with pages.)* As a kid,

A typical page from Kurt and Scott's epic high school effort, "The Battle of Lexington," says Busiek: "A more mindless piece of comics it would be hard to find."

"It's the market as much as the companies

I was doing fully rendered comics with incredibly detailed bizarre panel arrangements, and I was treating it as just a collection of pretty pictures. That's just what I'm trying not to do now. The work I'm doing now is almost completely the opposite of THE BATTLE OF LEXINGTON. So if I'm kind of critical of the more technique-oriented comics, it might be, in part, because I feel that's what I left behind. THE BATTLE OF LEXINGTON isn't all that bad for a 16 year old, I guess, but it reads like crap. It's terrible. And it's my fault just as much as Kurt's, if not more so! It's bad storytelling and, in the end, all it really is is 60 pages of drawings. If we had been less concerned with the drawings and more concerned with telling the story, then it would have probably been a lot more interesting in the long run. But, it was practice at least. We went on, both of us, to Syracuse University, where we worked on something for New Media publishing called VANGUARD, and did about 40 pages of that. Finished comics, inked, lettered, everything. Never got published, thank God. It was terrible, too. Three weeks before I left school, I got a job at DC production. *(Applause.)* I was lucky, basically: I sent a resume to **Bob Rozakis** shortly before leaving school, and it came at the right time. He needed somebody, and he invited me down to New York for an interview, so I flew to Massachusetts, got some old projects together, went to Manhattan, and showed him my portfolio, and got a job in production. So, Kurt and I basically went our separate ways shortly after that, and while in production, I did ZOT!. I designed about a hundred pages worth of presentation plates, character designs, and the first issue, fully pencilled, and the second issue, laid out, and both issues scripted, and sent this off to four companies at once. Those four being First, Eclipse, WaRP, and Pacific. And I brought them to two more, one of them being Marvel's Epic line, where I got an interview with **Archie Goodwin** just by telling him I had a hundred pages of finished material and a new character to show him. I was rejected there. Politely, of course, as anybody who knows Archie would expect. I also brought it, naturally, to the company I was working for, DC Comics. I went to **Dick Giordano** with a color portfolio that **Tom Ziuko** colored for me and Dick liked it, and was going to send it up to **Jenette Kahn**, but we had to pull the thing because ownership had become very important to me at that point. And if, in order to get it published, I had to give away the concept, I would have rather not seen it published at all. So Dick and I figured we might as well pull it, since DC at that point wasn't offering that sort of deal. I was accepted at WaRP and at Eclipse both, and got very positive reaction from Pacific and First, although we couldn't work out anything to our mutual satisfaction with either of those. ZOT! was actually going to

"If you had to pick one word to describe ZOT!, 'hope' seems to cover all the bases. Making hope work, making it practical."


I HATE GRADES! IT MAKES ME WORK TO SEE IT MARVIN WAVED BANNER AROUND ABOUT!
CAN'T THAT OLD BAG, MOTHER NATURE, TEACH IT SOME MANNERS!
YOU LOVED ALL LITTLE CREATURES, ASTRUE! AS MUCH AS YOU LOVED ME, YOU KNOW!
I LOVED YOU, YOU KNOW!
OH! I'M SURE IT WAS, MISTY!
OH? THEN I'M GLAD!
...IT WON'T HAPPEN IF I'M A STEP AHEAD OF THE CLOUDS!
OH, JAY!
WHAT'S WRONG, MY LOVE?
DO YOU REALLY THINK THERE COULD ever BE A "SHANE"?
BECAUSE YOU SOMEHOW HOW MEET MY HEART!
I DON'T CARE! STAY AWAY!
IT'S NOT YOU, IT'S JUST ROTTEN ASTRUE!
B-BUT, YOU KNOW I'M NOT!
WHAT I LOVED IN YOU COULD NEVER BE REMOVED!
IT CAN STILL BE LIKE BEFORE!
BUBBLE HEAD!
WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT A HONEYMOON?
I KNOW WHAT YOU KNOW, ASTRUE!
I KNOW YOU BREATHE! DOES THAT SERVICE A PART OF YOU?
...POOF! I'M BACK!
YOU MAY TRY TO BURY ME WITH BOOKS AND WORDS...
BUT JUST WHEN YOU THINK I'M DEAD...
YOU'RE GONE TO STAY AGAIN!
OOOF! IT WORKED! LET YOUR HEART BEAT YOUR HEAD BACK...
DOESN'T HAVE TO HURT!
SURRENDER TO ASSELAN!
NO!
LET YOUR HEART BEAT AGAIN!
NO!!

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holding us in the super-hero mold."

be a WaRP comic for a while there. I knew **Richard** and **Wendy** already, not too well, but I knew them, and they were nearby, and it just seemed like the best arrangement. But eventually it turned out that WaRP would be over-extending itself on a color comic, and Richard and I agreed to pull it there. And I went with Eclipse which, in the long run, was my best option anyway. I was, in the course of all this, delighted to find that the people in charge at the six or seven companies that I went to were all reasonable, intelligent people with good judgment, which I suppose you'd expect, but somehow it was a surprise to me. These people were a joy to talk to, and they had a lot of the same ideas about what ought to be done in comics that I did. They weren't the petty, cigar-chomping, heartless New York types *(laughter)* that I was afraid they might be. The people in charge in *most* cases are the *right* people, and it's the market as much as the actual companies that may be holding us back in the super-hero mold.

JIM: *I won't argue with you there.*

SCOTT: But I can't knock super-heroes much because Zot *is* a super-hero to anyone other than an American comic fan. I could show it to someone in Japan and they'd probably say, "Ah, yes, **Jack Kirby**!"

JIM: *What was working at DC like?*

SCOTT: Oh, DC production was a lot of fun. It was a 9 to 5, first of all, which meant that I could come home and work on whatever I wanted. There's a real freedom in 9 to 5 jobs, which I've lost now that I'm a freelancer, because there's no longer any such thing as "free time" when you're a freelancer. I really enjoyed working at DC. I learned the ropes, it was a good working environment, nice people up there. I think I even got a lot of material subconsciously just by working with so many people around me all day long. The same cast of characters, day after day, may have influenced the way I wrote my own cast of characters when the time came. And it was just a good experience for a year and a half. I really think a production job may be one of the best preparations a person can have. Maybe a lot of fans would think of it as a bit of a disappointment that they'd have to start there, but it shouldn't be. It helps.

JIM: *I agree.*

SCOTT: You did, too?

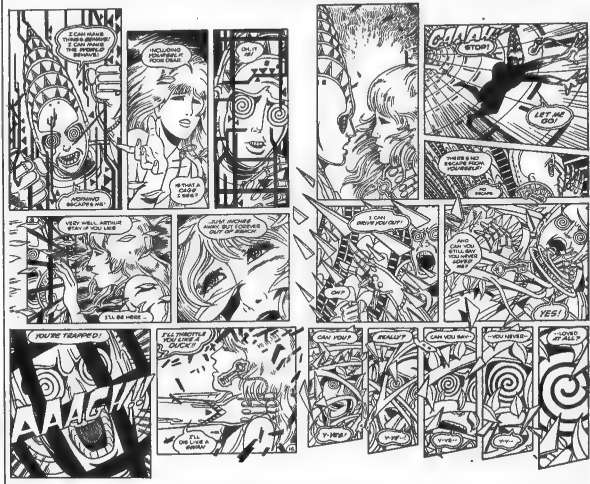
JIM: *I started below production, but I was 15 at the time.Well, when you were working on ZOT!, how did all these influences come together?*

SCOTT: Well, um...

KURT: In 25 words or less...

SCOTT: There are so many influences in ZOT! from so many different sources, I've really got to give some credit to a teacher I had at Syracuse, who was this mad prancing witch-doctor of a professor who was al-

This spread and overleaf: a powerful sequence from ZOT! #4, illustrating McCloud's sense of storytelling and ZOT!'s theme of hope and disillusionment.



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"I didn't want my *ideas* going through channels."

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ways going on about **McLuhan** and rock stars and even comic books, more-or-less randomly — definitely a product of the Sixties. But he taught me, whether he meant to or not, to look at everything, and to look at connections between the things that I had learned. And so I had a real cross-media attitude about me when I did ZOT!. Also, I had just moved to Manhattan, which helped, because I started working on ZOT! shortly after moving there. And I just wanted to put everything that *I* had learned and had been wanting to get out for so long, I wanted to put that all in one book. There was a lot of frustration, having so many ideas, and wanting to get people to see them without going through channels, because I didn't want my *ideas* going through channels until I was more sure of myself — where I wanted to go. So, in fact, even though there were a lot of people up at DC whose opinions I respected, I didn't show it to anyone except for **Ernie Colon**, who helped me out on some of the logistics of doing a presentation. He said, "You've got to show them that you can produce." That's why I did the mammoth presentation. But, I wouldn't show it to anyone up there because I wanted to make sure that before I did, *I* was happy with it, and then I would be on firmer ground when receiving suggestions. I'd be less likely to get "molded." I still showed it to friends like Kurt, of course —

KURT: We told him it was junk.

SCOTT: Very often. Especially when it was. Anyway, I didn't seek professional advice right away, although maybe I should have.

JIM: *What were some of the themes you wanted to do in ZOT!?*

SCOTT: They sort of evolved. This idea of the old visions of the future, from the Thirties and Forties, even the turn of the century and before that — I had that in my head before I even began ZOT! This running theme of hope and disillusionment showed up pretty early, too, but not until I had actually started doing some pages. And those two basic themes are related directly, of course, and if you had to pick one word to describe ZOT!, "hope" seems to cover all the bases. Making hope work, making it practical.

In Part Two: The origins of ZOT! in the four Jungian archetypes ...Warner Bros. cartoons...the mystery of what's behind The Door (not to mention what's on Jay's trays)...the artist as auteur...why so few women read comics...Wendy Pini's hidden strength ...and more, as Jim & Kurt join forces to double-team Scott!

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--Don Thompson
THE COMICS BUYER'S GUIDE
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STAR WARS

STEVE CANYON

COL. CANYON, THE TOUGH PART IS NOT KNOWING WHAT HAPPENED TO DOE REDWOOD!
YES, QUIZ, THEY COULD BE TORTURING HER AT THIS MOMENT!
THE "TORTURE" BEGINS!
TELL ME! TELL ME!
WAS THAT A REAL GORILLA HOLDING MISS FAY WRAY?

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"Mudwog is a nose that walks and talks."

ARTHUR SUYDAM

VITAL STATISTICS

Name: Arthur Suydam
Occupation: Freelance artist
Residence: New York City
Born: 1953 — Trenton, New Jersey
Training: Mostly self-taught with the aid of Albert Dorne's Correspondence Course.
Credits: HOUSE OF SECRETS, HEAVY METAL, EPIC and ECHO OF FUTUREPAST.
Favorite Watercolors: The Playtime 69¢ pallete of colors. You can buy them at any five-and-dime. Why Playtime? They're the brightest, and when you put them on a page, they stay on top of the page, easy to control. You can move them around without them sinking into the pages and giving you a stain.
Favorite Horror Films: NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD, THE TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE.

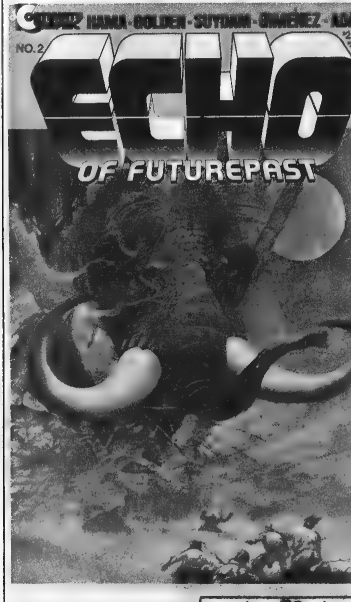
ARTHUR SUYDAM

"I was shooting for CREEPY. I

To be quite frank, Arther Suydam doesn't look like someone who draws (or paints, rather) comics for a living. Instead, he more closely resembles one of the hordes of New Wave artists and musicians who inhabit Manhattan's East Village, and where Arthur, in fact, lives. And that impression is a correct one; Arthur is a self-described "artist/musician", with his particular specialty being kick-ass Rockabilly guitar. In fact, before and during Arthur's involvment in the comics industry, he was playing in bands, and still finds time to play once in a while when he's not too busy at the drawing board.

On the day of the interview, however, I trekked to Arthur's apartment not knowing what to expect from a man whose work is notable not only for its outrageous humor, but also its outrageous violence and bizarre characters. With some trepidation, but secretly hoping that Arthur was as strange as his work, I entered the building and rang his bell. Arthur answered the door dressed in black jeans and a black sleeveless t-shirt, his hair cut fashionably short. As I entered his apartment, I peered expectantly into the corners of the neat grey and black room, but strangely, there wasn't a single mossy log or disemboweled bachtrian carcass in sight...

A mighty mastodon, ala Arthur, from the cover of ECHO #2.



STEVE RINGGENBERG: *Where did the Mudwog character come from?*

ARTHUR SUYDAM: Well, his look came about when I was experimenting with taking different parts of the body and then trying to create a whole body with one particular — like, say, turning an eyeball into a whole body, or turning a finger into a whole body. He just happened to be a nose. Then, at some point, I combined that with a lizard look and I came up with Mudwog, the result of turning a nose into something that walks and talks.

STEVE: *But — what about his personality?*

ARTHUR: Personality? *(Laughter.)* I didn't get it from any particular person or anything. It comes, really, just from what I think is funny. A lot of his experiences, I would say, are based on things either I or my friends have gone through. So, a lot of my own character comes through — as people remind me all the time, since I sound like this thing sometimes.

STEVE: *How many Mudwog strips appeared in HEAVY METAL first?*

ARTHUR: Let me see ... I originally designed it for HEAVY METAL. It was supposed to be a complete series that appeared in short segments — two, three, four pages at a time. I submitted to them maybe six chapters, and they printed the chapters all out of order. They printed the fourth chapter first, and the third chapter second, with something like six months in between chapters, so that nobody gave a — or — hoot what happened. Or had completely forgotten what happened. I got the remaining pages that weren't printed back from them, and decided to find somebody who would print them all in order.

STEVE: *Were you pretty ticked off?*

ARTHUR: Oh, yeah. *(Laughter.)* I was very upset about that.

STEVE: *How long ago did you go to Neal Adams with your Mudwog pieces?*

ARTHUR: I guess it was maybe about two years ago.

STEVE: *Oh, so it took that long to get it out?*

ARTHUR: A lot of stories that I've done have not gotten printed until maybe two or three years later. There is a story, for instance, that I submitted to EPIC magazine in 1978 or 1979, and it's still not out.

STEVE: *You don't seem like a typical comic-book fan. How did you get into comics in the first place?*

ARTHUR: I've always been a comic-book fan — I was really big on SPIDER-MAN, and after that I got into CREEPY, and from there I got into the EC comics. Originally, when I first came to New York, I was looking for a job with CREEPY. I went to see

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ended up in HOUSE OF SECRETS."

© 1982 Arthur Suydam

AH!
SWEET PLASMA PERFUME!
DRIP...! PLIP...! PLOP...!
DANCE YOUR DANCE, CRIMSON OOZE! DANCE IN CELEBRATION OF LIFE NO MORE! SEEP DOWN...DOWN... TO ANXIOUS PARCHED LIPS OF HUNGRY MOTHER EARTH!
YUK?

Splash panel from "Rites of Spring" in EPIC #13.

Jim Warren and I was only 17. I took some stuff in to show him, and he liked it a lot and wanted to hire me, but I was still in high school, so he asked me to come back when I graduated, which was about six months away. But when I came back to New York six months later, he was no longer the editor there. He had somebody else, and whoever else was the editor was away on vacation, so I just went around to DC and I saw **Joe Orlando** there, and he liked my stuff a real, real lot because he's a big horror fan and an EC fan. So, he decided to use me for HOUSE OF SECRETS. So, that's how I started in comic books, really. I was shooting for CREEPY, I ended up in HOUSE OF SECRETS.

STEVE: *You didn't do that much work for DC before moving on.*

ARTHUR: No, well you see, in working for DC, I was doing borders and other people's stories. That was real new to me, and I had a real, real hard time adjusting my style. I mean, my pages were very big, and

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CONAN Variant
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"DC aims at a very young audience."

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I'd never stuck balloons over my artwork. I found myself drawing around balloons, so I would always just have heads and hands in the panels. I guess I didn't have a lot of experience doing comic books, so I worked full time for them, but it took me a long time just to turn out a seven page story. It took me a least eight months to do the *first* story! I was having a real bad time. I was not prolific. *(Laughter.)*

STEVE: *Well, it seems like you got your style down pretty fast, because the work you were doing for HEAVY METAL and EPIC was much more polished than the first stuff.*

ARTHUR: It was a matter of adjusting. It took me a long time. Once I've adjusted to something, it's easy for me to do .

STEVE: *Yeah, it looks like you have a good grasp of the medium, because you're playing around with it. Your stuff has a real whimsical feel.*

ARTHUR: That's one of the reasons I like writing all of my own stuff. One of the reasons I left DC was that I didn't like the writing. I wasn't real crazy about the themes. The way I wanted to write is a little more adult than what DC wanted. They aim at a very young audience. So I had a hard time relating to that, and that's what really brought me over to HEAVY METAL. In my eyes it was the same thing, except that there was no censorship at all, and I could do whatever I wanted. **John Workman** is the guy who got me the job at HEAVY METAL. In just my dealings with him, he seems to have the greatest understanding of the medium — of artists, writers, and even the business end of the industry.

STEVE: *Who are your influences?*

ARTHUR: Early on I was real big on **Steve Ditko**. After that, I guess **Frazetta** and all the people from CREEPY — **Al Williamson, Reed Crandall, Angelo Torres**. When I looked at their work and I looked at my work, I saw what was wrong. I learned alot from them. From there I went on to EC and I learned a lot about horror from **Graham Ingles**. I liked him a lot.

STEVE: *Is Ingels someone who influenced the way you ink — that sort of spidery inking?*

ARTHUR: Yeah. See, what I always try to keep in my artwork is a lot of life and a lot of looseness. There are a lot of people who can draw real well, but somehow they turn out a technically goodlooking product that has an absence of life. I felt that **Ingels** was the greatest example of somebody who did not draw things in proportion, yet when you looked at it, it looked right. You know, a hand or a leg would be all twisted up in a way that it could never, ever go, and yet, you looked at it and it looked good. So there was a good lesson in that — not to get too sterile-looking. One of the big changes in my work — why I look more polished now — is that I'm developing a technique of sketching everything out first on paper, and I capture as much action as I can, the kind of action that I want in it, and from there

Eye-to-eye with the object of a Mudwog's amorous affections.

The Mudwog meets a not-so-jolly giant, from ECHO #2.

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"A lot of the stuff comes from my

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Hokusai's wave, per Suydam, in EPIC #13.

I trace over that and just tighten it up. But, I always keep the action of that sketch, rather than re-work the sketch. Because if you keep re-working the sketch, it just loses more and more life.

STEVE: *How about new artists you like?*

ARTHUR: I like **Wrightson** a lot. I think he's super. A lot of people ask me if he had any influence on my work, but he really didn't have any at all. Yet he puts a lot in his work that's like what I put in my work.

STEVE: *So it's sort of a parallel?*

ARTHUR: Amazingly so. Another influence was **Albert Dorne**, a commercial artist from the 1940s, who had an art course that used to be advertised on the backs of comic books. An uncle of mine took that course and I inherited those books. I taught myself from **Dorne's** books. **Norman Rockwell** was an influence, too. **Frazetta's** real similar to **Norman Rockwell** — they both have that same looseness.

STEVE: *Yeah. I noticed one of your things in EPIC which also showed the influence of* **Hokusai**, *a Japanese artist.*

ARTHUR: *(Laughter.)* Yeah, I stole the wave from that really famous painting of his "The Hollow in the Deep Sea Wave"! It was supposed to be a gag. I took this wave and then froze it, and there's supposed to be this little sign there that says: "Does this look familiar?"

STEVE: *I don't know how many people in comics, though, got the joke.*

ARTHUR: I mean, it was funny! I showed it to **Archie Goodwin**, and he said, "Boy, I like this panel." He didn't say anything about it being **Hokusai's** wave, and it was funny. But, anyway, I like **Hokusai** and **Hiroshige** a lot and I've learned a lot about design from him, and **Heinrich Klee** is a big influence of mine. Getting back to **Berni Wrightson**, I was reading this **Wrightson** book, and I found that every one of these guys I've mentioned were the same in-

The Romantic Manifesto of a Mudwog, as seen in HEAVY METAL and ECHO #1.

MAKIN' AMOROUS ADVANCES OF TH' SWEETEST NATURE
MUDWOGS IS TH' MASTERS OF WOO! WHICH'S ZACKLY WHAT I DOIN' THIS VERY MOMENT! I IS SADDLED WITH TH' JOB O' WOOIN' THIS STUPENDOUS AN' COLOSSAL CLAM!
YOUR LIPS AM LIKE TWO FAT EARTHWORMS IN TH' SPRING!...
AND THEN WORKIN' MYSELF UP TO TH' GOOD STUFF...
HIKE UP YOUR DRAWRS AN' SIT YERSELF DOWN ON DIS BABE, N' YOU IS MINE FOREVER! YUK! YUK! YUK!

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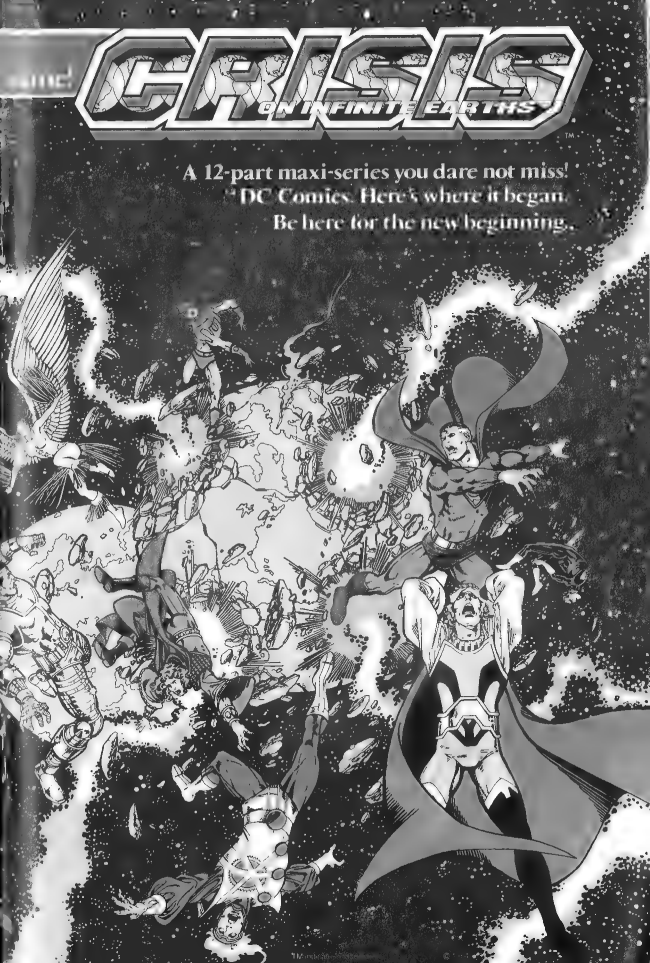
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childhood. I was always a lizard collector."

fluences on him, including **Graham Ingels**. So that's how we ended up looking similar.

STEVE: *The way you two handle hair and water is similar. But, your stuff in color has a much different feel than his.*

ARTHUR: I think it's different. But, in black and white, we both use a lot of line, and a lot of solid black, and in the same way. I think that's why people say, "Hey, this looks **Wrightsonish**." It's always when I'm working in black and white. When I draw in color, I never hear it.

STEVE: *Well, let's talk about your color stuff. You color has a pretty unique look. Part of that comes from the fact that you color directly on your originals. Why do you do it that way?*

ARTHUR: As opposed to which way?

STEVE: *As opposed to doing the art in black and white and then making a photostat to color.*

ARTHUR: Well, I just found out about that technique this last year, really. I'm just starting to experiment with it now. But, one of the problems that I've always had in printing is that I like keeping artwork as artwork. You really can't sell a photostat, because it's not really the original art, it's a print with color on it. When you work on photostats, you don't have an original to show to somebody. I like having original artwork.

STEVE: *How do you work?*

ARTHUR: As I say, I'm experimenting with bluelines, and it could be that I will switch over to bluelines more because it saves time. I spend half my time re-inking my work, when I'm painting. I ink a drawing, then I color it. Sometimes my color covers up my black line and I have to go back over it again and again, and that takes a lot of time, so that's why I'm experimenting with coloring photostats. If it's easier then I will certainly do it, because it will save a lot of time.

STEVE: *You're finishing up the last "Mudwogs" strip for ECHO OF FUTUREPAST. Are you doing anything else for Neal, or is that it for now?*

ARTHUR: Well, I'm doing seven covers for him that will appear after that as a portfolio.

STEVE: *Is Neal putting that out?*

ARTHUR: I believe so.

STEVE: *You're also a musician, too?*

ARTHUR: Ever since I was nine, I've been playing in bands, and I was always half musician and half artist.

STEVE: *Kind of made it tough on your deadlines.*

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"I've been hired to do three movies."

ARTHUR: It made it very tough, but they never gave me deadlines. They'd say, "Here's the story, take it. Take as long as you want." They never thought I was going to take as long as I did.

STEVE: *What kind of bands?*

ARTHUR: I've been in all kinds of bands. I'm self-taught there, too. I've played in psychedelic bands, jazz bands, country and western bands, Rockabilly bands, punk bands, and fusion bands.

STEVE: *Which musicians have you played with?*

ARTHUR: I've played with some of the guys from **Jean Luc Ponty**'s band, and I used to play with **Richie Cole**, an alto man who's a really big saxaphone player. I used to play with his backup band. This last year I got invited to play with **Bill Haley**'s Comets.

STEVE: *Did you?*

ARTHUR: No, I didn't. I went to check them out and they had lost all their zing. *(Laugher.)*

STEVE: *You were around in the city during, the early or mid-70s. Were you in touch with guys like Howie Chaykin and Kaluta?*

ARTHUR: No. I don't know those guys. I didn't live in the city. I lived in Trenton, New Jersey, and I spent a lot of my time in the woods. A lot of the stuff from my stories comes from my childhood. I was always a lizard collector. I would go to Florida every summer and catch alligators and snakes and things like that.

STEVE: *You seem to be fascinated by reptiles. What other interests do you have?*

ARTHUR: I go clubbing a lot. I go out to clubs as often as I can.

STEVE: *It must be hard to get any work done and still maintain a decent social life.*

ARTHUR: I probably do most of my work at night — since I work a lot faster now I am able to go out a lot.

STEVE: *Do you get any offers to do things other than comics?*

ARTHUR: It's all oddball things. I mean, I've been hired to do three movies.

STEVE: *Drawing storyboards?*

ARTHUR: No, concept design, which is what I like doing a lot. I design the spaceships, the monsters, the look of, say, the planet's surface — things like that. These movie guys keep coming after me. What I really need is somebody to bring me to their attention and show them my work, rather than having to dig me up somewhere. **Mike Ploog** and a lot of guys who are out in California do work on these things, too.

STEVE: *Ploog worked on THE THING.*

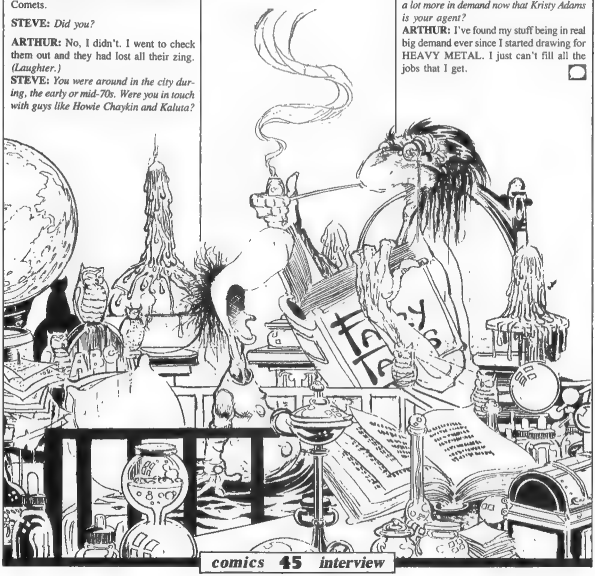
ARTHUR: Yeah. I liked that.

STEVE: *I assume that you're a big monster movie fan?*

ARTHUR: Yeah. I've seen them all.

STEVE: *Are you finding that your work is a lot more in demand now that Kristy Adams is your agent?*

ARTHUR: I've found my stuff being in real big demand ever since I started drawing for HEAVY METAL. I just can't fill all the jobs that I get.



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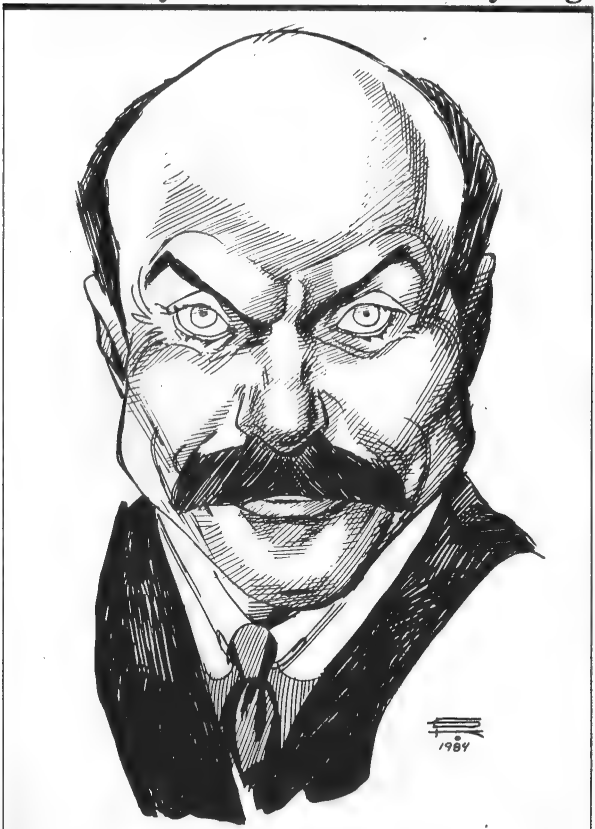
"I basically do a little bit of everything.



Art: Gil Kane

Primarily, it's managing the editors."

TOM CONDON

In the past couple years, there have been some sweeping changes at DC Comics– among them, the addition of "outside expertise" from beyond the comics field, in the form of several new staff members.

One such is Managing Editor Tom Condon.

His title is significant and yet, for all that, Tom has kept a low profile in comics...until now. On behalf of curious cognoscenti everywhere, Dwight Jon Zimmerman has conducted this exclusive interview with the man behind the scenes at DC's editorial offices...

DWIGHT JON ZIMMERMAN: *What exactly does a Managing Editor at DC Comics do?*

TOM CONDON: Well, I basically do a little bit of everything. Primarily, it's managing the editors, as it sounds. I also do scheduling, tracking of all material; I work as a liaison between production and editorial and between editorial and sales, marketing and publicity. I negotiate contracts and am a liaison between the contracts department and editorial department. I also, in a sense, do a bit of acquiring for DC in that all new proposals pass through my office. And with **Julie Schwartz**, we're searching for new Graphic Novel ideas. Since I came from book publishing, I'm seeing agents and writers from that field and finding out if they're interesting in presenting projects to us.

VITAL STATISTICS

Name: Tom Condon
Occupation: Managing Editor
Born: 23 January 1949 — Salem, Massachusetts. I read endless amounts of witchcraft and Nathaniel Hawthorne books when I was growing up. When you're from Salem, that's part of your history.
Residence: Upper West Side, New York City
Favorite Color: Green. It's always been my favorite color.
Favorite Time of the Day: Morning. I get up really early, 5:30, so I guess I have to like the morning.
Favorite Pastime: Working out in the gym. I work out every day before I go to work. I body build, but there's no specific goal. Reading.
Favorite Writers: Eudora Welty, William Maxwell

DWIGHT: *You mentioned book publishing. Where did you work before you came here?*

TOM: I was at Delacorte Press. I worked there as an assistant managing editor. I was also the executive administrator of their literary line. **Kurt Vonnegut** was one of our authors. I had a lot of fun working there.

DWIGHT: *How long were you at Delacorte?*

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TOM: I was there for three years.

DWIGHT: *How did you get your job at DC?*

TOM: I heard of the opening a year ago this past March. A friend of mine is managing editor at Warner Books and she called me and told me to quick get my resume over to Warner's, because the position had just opened. On March 17th, I rushed my resume over, running through the St. Patrick's Day parade.

DWIGHT: *How long was it before you knew you had the job?*

TOM: It seemed like forever. First you go through the Warner Communications Personnel Office and have numerous interviews with them. And then I talked to **Roni Villani**, who is in charge of the publishing division, and from that point on it went pretty quickly and smoothly, until, in June, I was here.

DWIGHT: *Was getting into the publishing field one of your big goals when you were young?*

TOM: Not really. I more-or-less fell into it backwards. I was a teacher for a number of years in Boston. And I came to New York City, Columbia University, to do graduate work. And while I was there, I started doing freelance work, reading manuscripts for Delacorte Press.

DWIGHT: *When you were younger, were you involved in any of the school or college publications?*

TOM: I've always been involved with literature at some level. When I was growing up, I did sort of the standard high school thing of being the editor of the literary magazine. I had aspirations, y' know, the next major American playwright. *(Laughter.)* I've always written, though not been published. As a child, I never read comic books. I'm relatively new to the comic-book world, and I find that it's a very fascinating literary form in itself.

DWIGHT: *What was the reaction of your friends and trade publishing associates when you left Delacorte for DC?*

TOM: That it was a step down. It was like, "You're leaving trade publishing — you're leaving *books*!" But after some of them came over here to see me, and they found out what it was like, what DC does and its visibility, their impressions changed a lot.

DWIGHT: *Is there, for instance, more activity at DC or the other comic-book houses than at the trade publishers?*

"Fantastic" art by Jose Luis Garcia Lopez, one of Tom's favorites. From the DC Style Guide.

TOM: Oh, yes, much more. Almost on every level. This is a much more exciting field than trade publishing. And since I've come to DC, a couple of other people I know have followed. Shorterly after I arrived, we hired **Brenda Pope** from Delacorte to be our copy editor. And she's very happy here. Another woman I worked with in book publishing, **Peggy May**, is now with us. Both Brenda and Peggy feel they made a good career move. And I share their feelings. It's very exciting here. The people are incredible. This isn't to say that you don't go crazy some of the time, but overall, it's really an "up" place to work.

DWIGHT: *How about agents and authors in the other fields, what was their reaction?*

TOM: Well, I've only talked to a few. The reason for that is that people outside comics

"I am impressed with the seriousness

don't know how to go about getting involved in this field. But doors are beginning to open. Right now comics, and how to do them, is still very much a mystery to those writers from the book industry. But what they've seen excites them a lot.

DWIGHT: *They don't look down on comics?*

TOM: Not in the least! The writers take it as a real challenge. They deal with it as seriously as they do with their other projects. And with as much respect. I think a lot of their attitude has to do with how we at DC greet and treat them. When they come over here, they see that DC is a professional company, that it's not some cellar someplace and that we're earnest . . . .

DWIGHT: *That you're concerned about them and their work?*

TOM: Yes, they're really impressed with DC. The writers are also very impressed with what we do with licensing.

DWIGHT: *What do you do with licensing?*

TOM: Personally, I don't handle it. Mary Moebus is in charge of the licensing division and she is incredible. DC is very aggressive. The things we've done with our characters like Superman and Wonder Woman — there just doesn't seem to be any end to the possibilities.

Garcia Lopez art from the DC STYLE GUIDE.

DWIGHT: *Relating that to writers and their own projects, they see an opportunity for a company to not only push their project, but also be in a position to sell licensing rights to prospective clients as well?*

TOM: Yes, this is something they don't get in book publishing. They do not license like the comic-book industry does. But I think what impresses these writers most is not so much what they can get out of it in ancillary services and rights, but that they see comics as a viable way of being published.

DWIGHT: *We've talked about all these other people, but we haven't discussed your first impressions. What was it like for you when you had to sit down and actually read comics?*

TOM: It was a big change for me. But I never had a negative feeling about it. I don't think you could be in any job and approach it negatively. I am very impressed with the seriousness people here have for what they do, and the comics that are produced. I was impressed at how themes are developed and expressed. I have to say that my apprecia-

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people have, and the comics produced."

Tom greets a meek, mild-mannered reporter in DC's reception room.

Photo: Dwight Jon Zimmerman

Clark Kent ® TM 1984 DC Comics, Inc

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Little Wendy went to church
but she didn't go to pray...

For in this church the
cross dripped blood

and little girls were
brought to slay.

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"I keep a distance from the creative forces."

tion of everything in and about comics has only grown since I've been here. When I arrived, I didn't know what a penciller was, what an inker was — I didn't know how these things were all put together. Seeing the original art is just incredible — I wish everyone would give me a page of what they've done. *(Laughter.)* **Gil Kane** is one of my favorite people in the business. I think Gil's a real character. He's a very intelligent man, I love speaking with him. And his art is fantastic. As is **Jose Garcia Lopez's** work. It's also really exciting to see new artists come along — I've seen people experimenting, doing things that are breathtaking. I'm thoroughly impressed with the industry and proud to be a part of it.

DWIGHT: *Can you tell us about some of those new projects?*

TOM: I hate to disappoint you, Dwight, but I really can't. Some of them are in the middle of negotiations. And a couple we have not yet done up the publicity for, so I don't want to raise anyone's hopes prematurely. Groundbreaking books like RONIN will be appearing soon. The creative future at DC is very bright.

DWIGHT: *Do you sit in on story conferences, Tom?*

TOM: No, I haven't done that yet, and in many ways I think it's good that I don't. I have to keep a distance from that part of the process — I can't get too deeply involved with details. I'm the one who carries the whip, so to speak, making sure things get out on time. So I like to keep a little distance between me and the creative forces.

DWIGHT: *Have you found yourself going into comic-book shops and other stores, checking things out?*

TOM: *(Laughter.)* Oh, sure! I've even started my own little collection.

DWIGHT: *Do you pay attention to what sort of people read comics?*

TOM: Yes, I do. When I wasn't involved in comic-book publishing, I wasn't aware of people reading them. Now I'm very much attuned to it. If I'm in the subway, and I see someone reading one of our comics, I'll go up, tell him who I am, and ask him what he likes and doesn't like about the comic.

And, when I go into a store, I immediately check to see if it sells comics, and if so, where they are and where ours are placed in relationship to our competitors'.

This summer, when I was in Europe, I even checked out whether or not stores sold foreign editions of DC comics, who read them — the whole bit. It was fun, seeing what they have over there.

What I find really interesting is that when I'm at a dinner party or some other such social thing, and I'm asked where I work, when I tell them, I discover that *everyone* knows DC Comics. No matter who they are, they're familiar with DC! It's like it was a part of everyone's past. We can get into the Museum of Modern Art across the street free with our Warner ID card. I held my card up to the guard one day and he not only knew about DC, but he knew the whole rap about JONAH HEX! This is not an isolated case. I don't think most of the people I've talked to read comics now, but they remember them as an important part of their youth. A part they'll never forget. And I don't blame them. Comics are really a folk art

"Bolland's art is very pictorial. Kirby's art is very action-oriented — it moves." Left: Cover of CAMELOT 3000 #11, by Brian Bolland. Right: Action scene, by Jack Kirby, from NEW GODS #6.

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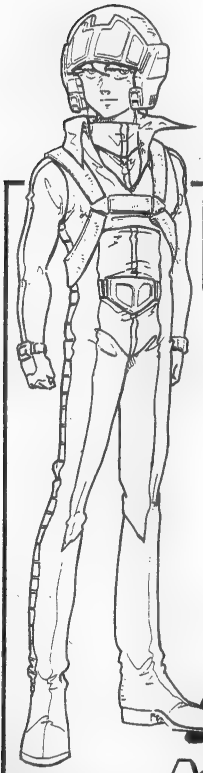

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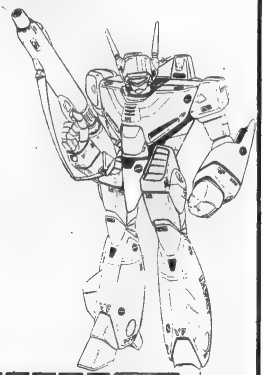

超時空要塞

マクロス

MACROSS

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"Doing a comic isn't as easy as it looks."

that's tied to the mythology of the United States. DC is going to celebrate its fiftieth anniversary next year. It's sort of awe-inspiring to think that this company is such an integral part of such an important genre of popular literature.

DWIGHT: *One of the reasons it has been so important is because it maintains a very close contact with its readership.*

TOM: That's true, Dwight. I went to my first convention this summer in Atlanta, not knowing what to expect. I was thinking that maybe I'd be bored, or that these people would be "out to lunch," and I was really proved wrong! It was one of the nicest experiences I ever had. All the people were incredible. And it was wonderful to see how interested everyone is about what you do. They're eager to talk to you, they want to know what is happening to their favorite heroes and what will happen. They had such enthusiasm! And not just about their heroes — but about anyone connected to them. I was shocked — people were asking me for my autograph! *(Laughter.)*

DWIGHT: *Kind of blows you away, doesn't it?*

TOM: Yes! And it's all because my name is in that little box, or down by the indicia. My experience ran the gamut of those who wanted my autograph, to those who asked me, "Are you famous or are you no one?" And I told them, "I'm no one, sorry." But even with that, it was just great seeing how much comics mean to them.

DWIGHT: *How about relatives, any of yours now reading comics?*

TOM: My niece and nephew have become huge comic-book fans. I think that would have happened anyway, but my little nephew actually thinks I work with Superman. They live in Boston, and I send things to them every so often. They both think Superman lives in this office.

DWIGHT: *Well, you have Clark Kent sitting in the reception area.*

TOM: That's true! *(Laughter.)*

DWIGHT: *Have you read many back issues of comics?*

TOM: Yes, primarily **Jack Kirby**'s work. As it was explained to me, he introduced a whole new movement in the comic book field. And I examined other artists' work, to see how they interpret a story and compared their styles with other artists. **Brian Bolland**, for instance, does outstanding stuff, but his is a whole different approach than **Jack Kirby**'s. Brian's art is very pictorial. **Kirby's** art is very action-oriented — it moves.

DWIGHT: *Have you considered writing a comic-book story yourself?*

TOM: I don't think anyone can be here two days without starting to think, "Well... maybe..." *(Laughter.)* Just the other night, **Charlie McDade**, who is in charge of contracts, and I were talking about it. We always play around with the idea of doing a comic book. So, to answer your question, Dwight, yes. But I think it would be very difficult. It isn't as easy as it looks.

DWIGHT: *What are your feelings about the future of super-heroes in the genre?*

TOM: I think they'll continue to be an important part of comics. But I believe they'll taper off a bit, and we'll see more of a mix of other kinds of stories. I hope that will happen, anyway, for variety's sake.

DWIGHT: *You've recently passed your first anniversary in the industry, Tom. Looking back, what has given you the most satisfaction?*

TOM: I think the most important thing, Dwight, is that I am very happy here. It goes back to what I said before about being involved with the whole DC world. It's exciting to see a comic or a graphic novel that I've helped produce sitting there on the stands. And, although the credit for the project rightfully belongs to the actual creative team, I get a lot of satisfaction knowing that, in my own small way, I had a hand in making that project a reality.

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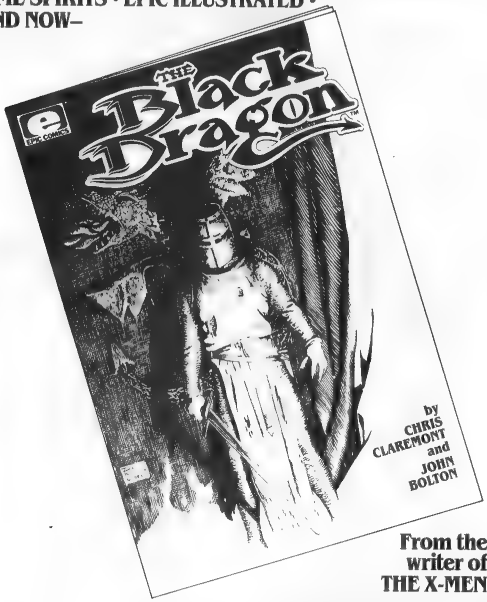

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"Everybody wants to write or draw comics. I never wanted that. I wanted to sell them."

CAROL KALISH

As the head of Marvel's direct sales division, Carol Kalish has quite naturally attracted a lot of attention–not always positive. She makes no secret of the fact that her loyalties are to Marvel, and she helps set policies that directly or indirectly affect everyone reading this magazine, from setting up convention appearance programs for creators to promoting new product to distributors to working out co-op advertising for retailers.

She is extremely articulate, and she can be very persuasive. She can also hold her own in an argument. In some quarters, she has been called "Marvel's Mistress of Propaganda." I have always found Carol to be pleasant and informative, although she can be very direct–as you might expect from someone in charge of direct sales.

DAK: *How did you discover comics?*

CAROL KALISH: I inherited the hobby, quite frankly. My mother was a comic-book collector when she was young, back in the 30s and 40s. She started collecting comics when they were just newspaper strip reprints. Her collection was huge, and she was a *very* enthusiastic collector. In fact, she never forgave the Japanese for bombing Pearl Harbor — she was there at the time and she couldn't take her comic-book collection when she evacuated.

So Mother has to take the credit (or blame) for my collecting comics. She bought my first comics for me. She got me interested in the super-heroes — Batman, Wonder Woman, Green Lantern, and (YUM) The Sub-Mariner — that she loved.

Mother started me on comics, though, for another reason as well. When I was very young both my sister and I were diagnosed as having reading disabilities. My mother figured that we couldn't read because we were bored by the material we were being taught with. So, she decided we should be reading comic books and PRIDE AND PREJUDICE. That's what got me reading. PRIDE AND PREJUDICE was the first book I ever read, and a 1959 or 1960 SUPERMAN was the first comic I ever read.

DAK: *You worked as a retailer and also as a distributor. How did you get into that end of the industry?*

VITAL STATISTICS

Name: Carol Kalish
Born: 14 February 1955
Residence: Leonia, New Jersey
Occupation: Director of Specialty Sales at Marvel Comics
Training: Graduated from Radcliffe College at Harvard with honors in Geology and a specialty in Mediaeval History. Worked as a Comic-Book Retailer and Wholesaler, and as an Assistant Editor on a line of short-lived black-and-white comic books.
Favorite Comics: The Simon and Kirby love comics of the 1940s and 1950s — marvelous morality plays.
Pet Peeve: Nothing, really. I don't get excited about negatives, only positives.
Favorite Presidential Candidate: He's dead. *(Laughter.)* If Thomas Jefferson were alive today, I'd be out there campaigning for him.

"Generally, I see the industry in terms

CAROL: Well, first of all, I had worked in general sales, primarily for an advertising company, for about a year. I got very bored. The hours were very long, and I couldn't do much that was very creative. I left and became Circulation Manager for a small, struggling, and now — I believe — bankrupt line of fantasy and science-fiction magazines. GALILEO was its spearhead. While I was with GALILEO I was also working part-time as a comic-book retailer and advisor, running the comic-book section of a bookstore.

DAK: *Where was this?*

CAROL: This was all in Boston. I was also hanging around The Million Year Picnic in Cambridge a great deal, and became a very good friend of the manager of that particular store. He was giving me a lot of tips on successful retailing practices.

After about two years with GALILEO, I worked in my spare time on a very short-lived comic-strip publication, CHAPTERS, which was publishing continuity comic strips. That kind of got me into fanzines.

While I was looking for distributors for CHAPTERS, I hooked up with New Media Distributing, which was a very large direct-market distributor. I was offered a job with New Media's sister publishing company. I could stay in Boston, so it seemed a great career move.

I became assistant publisher and managing editor of a line of small, low-production-value fanzines. It eventually evolved into an attempt to start a line of black-and-white comic magazines. This was short lived, primarily because of financial problems, but bits and pieces of those comics have been resurfacing. For example, "The Djinn," which was the backup feature in COYOTE, first came into existence under that company's aegis. Eclipse's "Rio" and "Nightingale" also were developed for these magazines. When the black-and-white magazine died, these projects were sold to whomever wanted them.

DAK: *Well, what happened to you when New Media died?*

CAROL: I came directly here. I never believed in just one job at one time. Working for Marvel is the first time I've ever done something that takes up all my energies. While I was working for New Media Publishing as the managing editor and assistant publisher, New Media Distribution needed a warehouse in the Boston-Cambridge area — and what better person to run it than me? I became the manager of Solar Spice, which was the regional warehouse for New Media Distribution in Cambridge and pretty much serviced most of the comic-book needs of the Boston-Cambridge-New England area. At the time I left it, after about a year

The Djinn © 1982, 1984 Steve Englehart
Art © 1984 Steve Ditko

# of what's good for Marvel Comics."

and a half of managing it, we were probably selling maybe about sixty percent of the direct-sales comics being sold in that entire New England area.

Toward the end of my tenure with New Media Publishing and New Media Distribution **Mike Friedrich** was looking for an assistant manager of Direct Sales. He needed an assistant who had a background in distribution and retailing, and preferably somebody who was familiar with magazine publishing in general. We had already been in touch periodically because of my distribution efforts in the Cambridge area, so after a couple of interviews he thought our personalities would mesh very well, and he hired me. Two months later he left the company. That put me in a position where all of a sudden I was Direct Sales Manager. Terrific training — it was kind of, "Hi, this is where you sit, we're moving in three weeks, three weeks after that I'm not going to be here and you're running the show."

DAK: *Wasn't it kind of strange — you coming into Marvel from New Media, given that New Media was going bankrupt while owing Marvel a lot of money?*

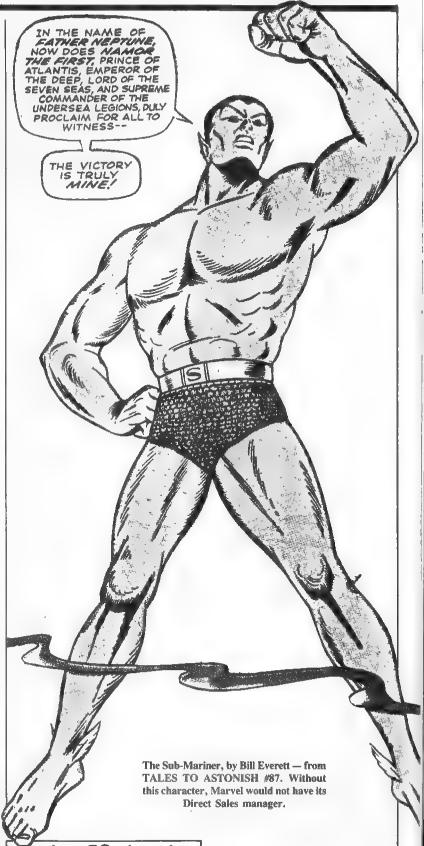
CAROL: I guess I was just running a particular operation within New Media. There is a group of people who all worked for New Media, either in the distribution end or the publishing firm, and we have all gone on to be fairly important in the industry. Don and Maggie Thompson, for example, also worked for New Media. I think the major asset that I was hired for was my experience, and my experience and responsibility were administrative. So when I was hired, it was primarily for skills that I learned — in isolation, basically — from New Media's financial department.

DAK: *That leads me to ask — what is it that you do?*

CAROL: I push quite a lot of paper around. I answer the phone. I trouble-shoot. Basically, I function in one of two capacities: First, I function as somebody who creates new programs, somebody who says, "If I were a retailer and I had these types of problems, how could a publisher solve them for me?" And if a publisher *can* solve them, then the question arises, "Why shouldn't Marvel be that publisher?" Then I have to create the programs.

DAK: *Can you give any examples of those types of programs?*

CAROL: Take a co-op advertising program: It's always a problem for a retailer to advertise. He knows he should do it, but there's the problem; "How should I pay for it?" Well, maybe publishers should carry some of the weight of advertising costs. That's fine, except that the publishers, of course, want something specific out of it.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THE VICTORY IS TRULY MINE!

The Sub-Mariner, by Bill Everett — from TALES TO ASTONISH #87. Without this character, Marvel would not have its Direct Sales manager.

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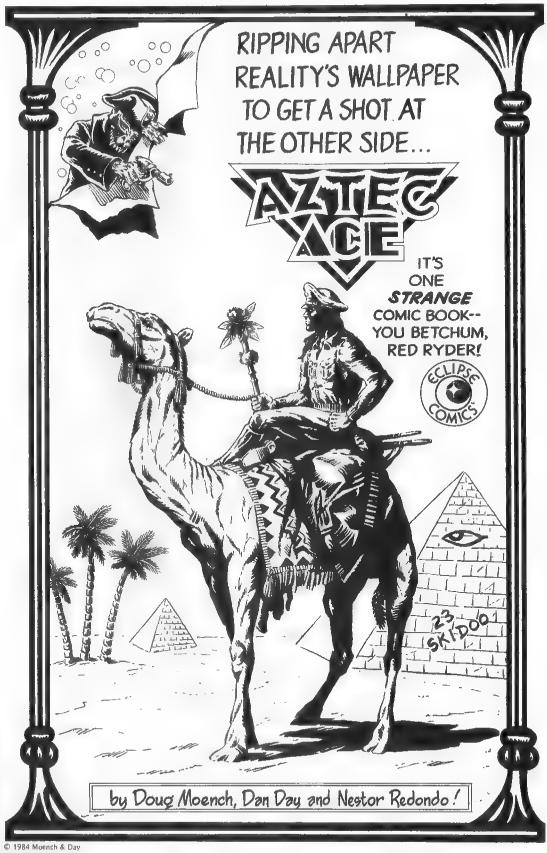

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"To sell more, Marvel has to take a greater risk."

Sample pages from Marvel's co-op ad book.

They want the ad to work specifically for their product lines. So Marvel would come up with this co-op advertising plan, which in essence would say, "Okay, if you advertise Marvel comic books, or Marvel comic products, we will help you pay for the advertising." That gives the retailer greater flexibility and greater ability to advertise his store, to get new customers who will buy more comics, and everybody comes out ahead.

To give another example: As more and more comics titles are produced, retailers complain, "Where will I put them all? How can I display all these books?" The answer is you buy more racks, which enlarges your display space. But, that's costly. The answer, at Marvel, is that we have a rack co-op plan, in which we pay for racks. If we bring out more comic books, that's fine — we've already paid for space, not only for our comic books but for everyone else's comic books, too. There are limits to these programs, but they exist, and they were created to answer very specific retailing needs.

DAK: *And what's your second function?*

CAROL: Assuming that my retailers can sell what I'm giving them, and that they don't have any problems that I haven't solved, my second function is to ask: "What problems do my distributors have?" These types of problems would primarily be things like shipping problems, discount problems, administration, and procedural problems. Again I have to think, "Okay, if Marvel can solve this problem, we should — but how can I solve it so that both Marvel and the distributor benefit from it?"

DAK: *Can you give an example of that kind of problem solving?*

CAROL: Our distributors naturally enough don't want to order more copies of any comic book than they know can sell. Maybe their retailers have sent in their order forms, and each retailer is ordering, say only two hundred copies of a certain issue of X-MEN. But I've seen that particular issue, and I think this is a tremendous X-MEN issue! It's going to sell way above average! How can I arrange it so that my distributors can have access to extra copies of this issue, at little or no risk to them?" And the way I set about doing that was to create a reorder program which was so easy to use, and so convenient that there is virtually no disadvantage to a distributor to use it.

DAK: *Isn't that a disincentive for them to order accurately to begin with?*

CAROL: No, because I think everyone really wants to have enough copies which they know, deep down inside, that they can sell. If a retailer orders enough copies up front, when he should order them, it's very, very simple — there's no real cost to the distributor in terms of processing that order. But if that retailer gets the comic and claps his hand to his forehead and says, "My God! I need more copies!" When he calls up his distributor, it's going to be more costly for the distributor to process that re-order than it would have been to process an order for a sufficient amount in the first place. So the distributor will probably put a penalty of some sort on the retailer, and there really will be an incentive for the retailer to order correctly up front.

DAK: *So you're shifting the risk over to Marvel?*

CAROL: Not really. We're sharing the risk. The retailer has the option that if he wants to play it conservatively, he can, but it's going to be more expensive for him. If

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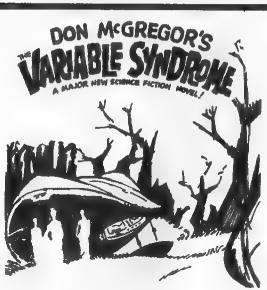

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The mourners were serpents.

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"What the hell do you make of all that?" Caramante whispered.

"Intelligence," Halloran said, his eyes scarred with death.

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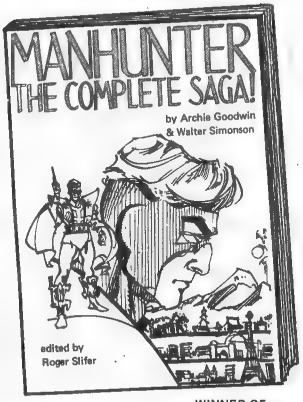

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"Marvel is *not* becoming a distributor."

Marvel wants to sell more comics, we have to take a little greater risk.

DAK: *Do you also assess business practices of the distributors?*

CAROL: I do and I don't. Marvel does not deal directly with retailers. It's not my business to walk in and say, "You're being screwed by your distributor!" Or, "Mr. Distributor, you're being screwed by your retailer!" That's not my job. My job is to set up programs which will be beneficial to everyone. And if you, the retailer, are not pleased with how your particular distributor is administering those programs, there are lots of other distributors out there. Each distributor is offering a certain package. Some of them are saying, "Well, I won't give you as high a discount, but I'll give you terrific service and support." And others say: "I'll give you a terrific discount, but service and support is costly, so don't expect a lot from us." And others will be somewhere in between. They'll say, "I'll give you a pretty good discount, and I'll give you as much service and support as I possibly can, given the fact that I'm not making as much money as I normally would."

DAK: *What about Marvel's relationship to the distributors? For instance, a new distributor getting started, or a current distributor getting in financial trouble — is that part of your purview?*

CAROL: If it's a financial problem, I can be called in by our accounting department as an advisor. They may ask me, "What is the reputation of this distributor? Do you think he has a bad reputation for burning other people?"

Occasionally a distributor might run into a short cash-flow problem and I'll walk in and say, "Yes, I know he has a cash-flow problem. It's because a tornado swept through his city, and it wiped out four of his largest accounts. Those accounts are getting back on their feet, they haven't paid their distributor, yet, but they will soon. So, don't worry about it — it's short term." Or I can say, "I know this distributor, he's been diversifying a great deal, he's been funnelling a lot of money into associated fields that are kind of irrelevant to comics — such as buying paperback books — and that diversification is not too successful.

DAK: *There were, at times, rumors that Marvel would attempt to become its own distributor in the direct-sales market.*

CAROL: I've heard that rumor for eight or nine years. I can't really say what could happen ten to fifteen years down the road, because business changes, but right now I wonder how realistic it is to expect Marvel to distribute to four thousand or five thousand companies, when we have problems really servicing more than twenty-five firms right now. When you think of all the people that are employed by all of our distributors, you're talking well over three or four hundred people. Marvel's Direct Sales Department has a staff of three. I don't think three people — competent as we are — can do the work of four hundred.

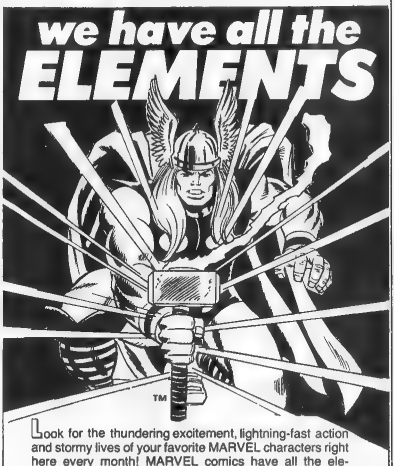
DAK: *So Marvel isn't thinking of becoming a distributor?*

CAROL: No, Marvel is *not* thinking of becoming a distributor. We're really satisfied with the way our distribution system is set up right now, given some improvements. There *are* some parts of the country that I think would benefit from a distributor servicing them more closely than they are currently being serviced. I watch those parts of the country. I try to encourage distributors to open up warehouses in those regions of the country —

DAK: (Gesturing.) *Is that indicated on the map here, with pins?*

CAROL: That's my famous pin map! Periodically I get darts and throw them at the map and say, "Ah-hah! That's were the direct market is going to burgeon next!" *(Laughter.)* But, no, that map is a physical reminder that New York is inundated with distributors and South Dakota doesn't have a single one. That's primarily because New

Sample of a Marvel co-op ad.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IN THIS AREA
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"It would be suicidal for the direct market

York and surrounding states are inundated with comic-book stores and South Dakota has very few. But that's also an indication that possibly I should be doing a lot of publicity and promotion about comics in South Dakota and North Dakota — areas where people aren't buying comics, and therefore have to be really convinced to buy them.

DAK: *And maybe can't find them because there aren't enough comic-book stores.*

CAROL: You know, I occasionally analyze our subscription list to find out which states have an unusually high per capita subscription rate, because that's a good indication that people would want these books, but can't find them. I'm always trying to encourage stores to open up in those areas.

DAK: *You anticipated my next question, which is: Are you doing anything about that?*

CAROL: Always. Sometimes we try to create programs which will encourage people to sell to certain audiences or in certain areas. We also try to develop existing avenues that are not currently distributing comics, but should be. For example, for the past few years, Marvel has been showing up at the American Booksellers Association, every year — not particularly because comic-book retailers show up there, but because there are a lot of bookstores across the country who are carrying magazines but are not carrying comics. So we show up every year to try and convince them that if they can make money off magazines, they can make money off comics. Every year we pick up twenty or thirty new bookstores, generally in parts of the country that have no comic-book stores.

DAK: *Did you have anything to do with Marvel getting into Waldenbooks?*

CAROL: That is a very whacky story. The way Waldenbooks really got sold on carrying comics was a direct-market account I was servicing — when I was a distributor up in Massachusetts — sold several Walden stores on the idea of carrying comics on a returnable basis. Those stores showed a profit off the comics they were given, and after a time Walden started to notice this on a corporate level. They became interested in possibly carrying comics at a higher discount than the independent distributors would offer them on a returnable basis. They came to Marvel, actually, and while I was not really involved in the specific deal, I am now involved in handling details and acting as advisor to Walden's very nascent comic program. I think I'm in charge of it — I'm not quite sure. *(Laughter.)*

DAK: *Is this going to represent a substantial circulation increase?*

CAROL: It might. Even more importantly, it represents a phenomenal expansion in our exposure. Walden-sold comics will be visible in mall stores all over the country. Malls have phenomenal foot-traffic. There are all these people who will be seeing comic books. Again one of the major problems with comic-book retailing is that nobody knows that comics exist or, in the case of older readers, that comics *still* exist. The number of locations that sell comic books have shrunk to such a small number that it's very routine to walk up to people and have them say, "Oh, they still publish comics? I didn't know that!" So having those books at Walden is a real solid accomplishment just in terms of the exposure factor. Also the Waldenbooks program is going to have immeasurable positive impact on the direct market because reading comics is not one of those skills you were born with. You really have to get used to buying comics. You start out buying occasionally, then get hooked on the storylines, then you get addicted to them and have to buy them every single month and, finally, you start to lie awake at night thinking of all those gaps in your collection. But the time you're lying awake at night, thinking about back issues, *that's* when the comic-book specialty stores strike — that's when they alert you to the fact that there's a whole specialty market oriented to servicing the peculiar needs of the comic-book fan. So what will happen with millions of people in the United States, Waldens will show comics to hundreds of thousands of them. A certain percentage of those people will buy comics on a casual basis. A certain percentage of those casual buyers will become committed buyers. And *those* buyers will eventually be picked up by the direct market. Those are potential customers that the direct market is not now currently contacting.

Marvel's Waldenbooks display.

DAK: *Is Walden being serviced by Curtis Circulation — Marvel Comics' national distributor?*

CAROL: No. It's a hybrid between Curtis and the direct sales department. To all intents and purposes, Walden is going to become an independent distributor in and of itself, only all the accounts it services are Waldenbook stores.

DAK: *Well, Curtis is part of the Cadence conglomerate —*

CAROL: Right.

DAK: *— so Marvel sort of has a captive newsstand distributor.*

CAROL: Right.

DAK: *How much crossover do you have with them, in terms of distribution? Do you ever communicate with them?*

CAROL: Constantly. We have an account executive, **John Winkler**, who does a superb job, and is part of Curtis. The purpose behind this *liaison* is to make sure that Marvel is satisfied with Curtis' performance, and if there are particular programs that Marvel wants to institute to help comic-book sales, then John is there to promote them. We also have a newsstand manager whose name is **Denise Bove**. Denise's position is similar to mine — she primarily goes out and talks to newsstand distributors, to make sure that if there's anything that can be done to better Marvel sales, they're doing it.

DAK: *Which division handles the bagged comics?*

CAROL: That's Marvel Books. It's a division established to handle auxiliary publishing, coloring books and other publications using Marvel characters and other licensed characters, to break into the chain market — places like K-Mart and Toys 'R' Us and Child World. Around the same time

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to do away with the returnable marketplace."

Photo: Oscar & Associates, Inc

Steve Saffel presides over Marvel's display at an American Booksellers Association convention.

we were starting Marvel Books we had also decided to bring a bagging program in-house, so we gave the bagging program to Marvel Books. They've been phenomenally successful. They sell a lot of those bags — three Marvel Comics for $1.69 or whatever it is — to Toys 'R' Us. Toys 'R' Us sells all those bags to parents, primarily.

DAK: *Well, Marvel certainly has changed in the last five years. It was once only newsstands, and now it seems that Marvel is just about everywhere.*

CAROL: And looking for more places to get into. Basically, the various distribution programs we have — newsstand, direct sales, Marvel Books — service different types of marketing and address different types of consumer needs. You have Marvel Direct Sales, which primarily is addressing the serious collector, regardless of age, whose motivation is that he doesn't want to miss an issue and wants all of his comics to be in top condition. Marvel Books, on the other hand, is generally addressing the question "What can we sell little kids — not directly, but by appealing to their parents, who are looking for something to buy their kids?" The parents are looking for coloring books, activity books, picture books, or bagged comics, which seem like a better buy than just buying comics straight off the rack. And the newsstand is primarily a mixture of those two kinds of marketing efforts. Generally, it's aimed at the casual buyer, but if also might attract a serious collector who can't get to a comics specialty store. So our distribution channels all complement each other, and they all advance Marvel's real marketing plan — which is to get comic books and comic-related material into as many diverse hands as possible, and to have our characters appeal to as wide an audience as possible.

DAK: *What do you see happening with the direct-sales market in the future?*

CAROL: Well, I think what's really going to happen is that there's going to be really intense competition for different market groups, among publishers. You can already see it with Marvel Comics. We're developing three different imprints for three different audiences. We have the Star comic-line for kids and for people who are interested in less-violent, more humor-oriented comics. We have the Marvel Comics that are accessible to almost any age group but are primarily super-heroes. And we have Epic Comics, which are much more mature in subject matter, with diverse themes and storylines and *genres* which appeal to older readers or people who aren't quite as intrigued by super-heroes any longer. You can see other publishers doing exactly the same thing — they're choosing an audience group and directing their product-line accordingly.

DAK: *And will that affect distributors?*

CAROL: I think it will, only in so far as it demands a greater sophistication on the part of the retailer and the distributor in the direct market. The retailer has to be more aware of just how many older readers he has, or just how many younger readers he

ON SALE SOON:

- A DIFFERENT VIEW FROM THE CREATOR OF -

normalman !

AT BETTER COMICS SHOPS EVERYWHERE

CAROL KALISH

"For the first time in comics history —

has, or what percentage of his customers will buy genre series. The distributor has to evolve to better meet the reorder needs and back-stock demands of today's retailer. The distributor will also have to develop service and advisory programs which help retailers. I.A.D.D.'s decision to sponsor trade shows is an excellent first step in this evolution.

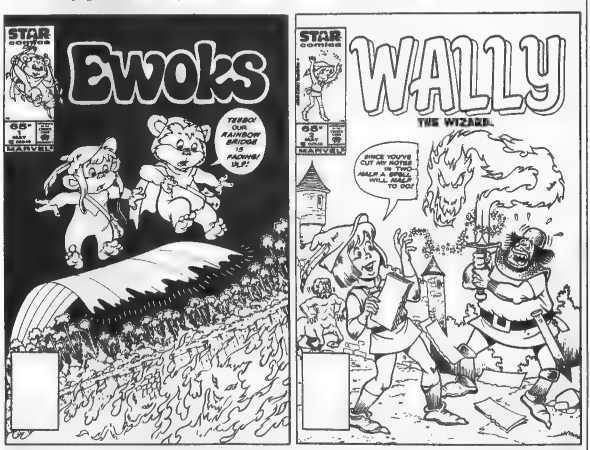
DAK: *Do you think the market will continue to grow?*

CAROL: I think it's going to become incredibly large. **Mike Friedrich** and I always disagreed on one point: **Mike** always thought that the direct-sales distribution system would eventually sell all comic books sold in the United States — at least all Marvel comics. I don't think that will ever occur, and I don't think anybody in the direct market should even want it to occur. The direct market is most successful at servicing the needs of hobbyists — people who are committed comic-book buyers. The ID wholesale marketplace and the Waldenbook marketplace are serving the casual reader. As those casual readers become comic fans then the direct market can step in and capture those consumers. So to my mind, it would be almost suicidal for the direct market to try to do away with the returnable marketplace — the newsstand, the drugstores that sell comics, the mall stores that sell comics. They don't sell comics as well as the specialty stores, but they get people aware of comics to a much greater degree than the isolated, limited number of speciality stores could ever do. So the major reason I think that the marketplace is going to expand is that for the first time in many, many years the returnable market is expanding. I think this expansion of the returnable marketplace will *have* to lead to the expansion of the direct market, just because there will be more people becoming comic-book hobbyists. That's the major reason why I'm optimistic about growth and the future of the comics industry. That's also the major reason I like working for Marvel, because Marvel is in the forefront of finding new ways to reach people who are not already buying comics — finding ways to bring comic books back into supermarkets, into mall stores and bookstores and chain stores. We're really the leading edge in new audience development. The rest of the industry derives incredible benefit from our efforts.

DAK: *How is marketing strategy set?*

CAROL: It starts with somebody sitting down and just dreaming. "In a year, where would I like the marketplace to be? In five years, where would I like it to be? In my vision of reality, what would I like comic-book sales to be like twenty-five years from now?" Sometimes, I do that dreaming. Sometimes, **Jim Shooter** does that dreaming. Sometimes **Ed Shukin**, Vice-President in charge of circulation — my superior — does the dreaming. Sometimes, **Jim Galton** comes up with his version of what he wouuld like the market to be, somewhere in the future. Then depending on whoever the dreamer is he or she comes up with a policy or a program and presents it. "This is where I want the market to be and this is how I think we can achieve that market." And everybody else involved — and by

"We're developing three different imprints for three different audiences." Star Comics joins the Marvel and Epic imprints.



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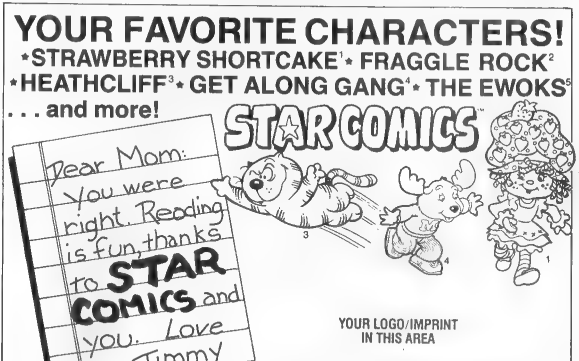
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. . . and more!
STAR COMICS™
Dear Mom:
You were right. Reading is fun, thanks to STAR COMICS and you. Love
Timmy
YOUR LOGO/IMPRINT IN THIS AREA

Until May 1st, Marvel will reimburse 100% of the costs of advertising Star Comics, provided approved ads such as this one are used and each retailer's proposed ad budget is approved in advance.

"everybody else," I mean me, **Mike Hobson**, **Ed Shukin**, possibly **Denise Bove**, possibly **Jim Shooter** or **Jim Galton** would all get together and just talk. We would talk about whether or not that dream — that version of what the market should be like — is the company's vision of what the market should be like. Is it good for Marvel Comics? If something is good for Marvel, it probably will be good for most of my distributors and my retailers, and probably even for most of my competitors, insofar as marketing plans are concerned. Because most of the time, when I come up with a marketing plan, it's how to increase the efficiency of selling *comics* or how to get more people into *reading* comics, not just Marvel, but comic books in general.

DAK: *Do you ever confer with your counterparts at any of the other companies?*

CAROL: Sometimes I do, in a kind of an informal gab session, especially at conventions. You run into someone and you say, "Gee, join me," and you'll talk about comics and what could be done to get more people into reading comics, or how could we broaden the audience. Sometimes you get together on a more organized basis. Occasionally, the Comic Magazine Association will get together and try to come up with a more organized approach to broadening the industry and solving the industry problems. Generally speaking, I think each company operates independently and does take the view that whatever is good for them is good for the industry.

DAK: *You mentioned Ed Shukin as being your superior. What's his part in all this?*

CAROL: Ed has an incredible part in terms of the creation of the direct market. He was the person at Marvel who decided, "Okay, even if it does upset my ID distributors, I will sell to distributors on a non-returnable basis at a different discount." So while he doesn't get a lot of credit, he certainly deserves a tremendous amount of it for his flexibility. Magazine distribution is very conservative. You don't get a lot of people like Ed who have the vision to say, "Okay, sure, I'll give something new a try."

DAK: *In fact, he's straddled all three methods of distribution over the years.*

CAROL: His speciality is magazine sales — the traditional ID market area. The concept of being really concerned about a writer or an artist or a storyline is not usual in magazine distribution. Ed knows it's important, but he doesn't have the familiarity with the comic content to be able to predict in advance what will sell in the direct market. Ed's always been open about the fact that, if he didn't have specific skills, he'd hire somebody who does. As soon as he realized the direct market was becoming a significant aspect of our sales, he started the Direct Market Division of the Circulation Department and hired **Mike Friedrich** to manage it. When Mike needed to expand his department, I came on board. When I needed to expand my department, Ed was very supportive in that area, too. So, while Ed doesn't have any really immediate contact with the direct market, he's been incredibly active behind the scenes, pushing programs that I believe will aid the direct market. He also smoothed a lot of political battles, especially when I was new on the job and did not really know how to guide programs through. I think we work very well together. He's a terrific supervisor, primarily because he tells the people he hires. "This is your area, and I'll back you in what

"Such an American medium — something

you want to do with it." He tells great jokes, too!

DAK: *Could you pick a specific marketing plan and go through it step-by-step, to see how such a plan is created and implemented?*

CAROL: Possibly the best example of that is Star Comics. Star Comics is a line of humor books that primarily is designed for a younger market, or for people who are not interested in super-heroes. Ever since Harvey Comics stopped publishing, which was almost two years ago, the Circulation Department had been worried about the fact that there were no kids' comics. That worry was shared by the Editorial Division. They came up with the concept of a kids' line. Then we had the problem, "Can we sell them?" There hadn't been kids' books for almost two years, and we didn't know if we had an audience left. Ed had to do his market analysis for the ID market, I had to gauge what kind of interest in the direct market there would be for a kids' line and the Marvel Books people had to figure out how many bagged comic sets of these kids' books could be sold to Toys 'R' Us, K-Mart, and

places like that. Then we all had to get together and figure out whether or not we could sell enough books in all three of these various marketplaces to break even. We think we can although we probably won't make a tremendous amount of money off it. So then all of the people involved — **Mike Hobson**, **Jim Galton**, all of the distribution people and the editorial people — had to get together and say, "Is it worth it? If we're not going to make a tremendous amount of money, why should we do it?" And that's really where marketing comes in, where everyone throws in their two cents and says, "Well, I think we should do it, because if we don't do it, we won't have any comic-book readers a few years from now." Or Ed might say, "There's a void in the market area, and wherever there's a void, somebody's going to fill it, so we might as well do it. We have the expertise, we have the manpower, we have the distribution, I think it's a good idea for us to do kids' comics." Or the Marvel Book group could come in and say, "Well, we occasionally get requests for quieter comic books, especially for little kids. So I think we should do it because we're getting requests for that kind of material." You get all these marketing reasons for why we should do it. So even though there isn't a lot of money in it, there

DOG BOY

© CAT-HEAD COMICS 84

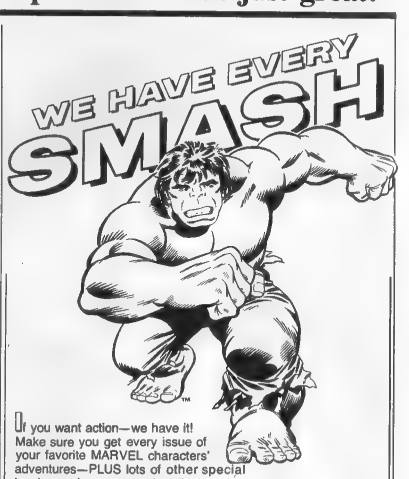
FANS BEST FRIEND

so cheap and disposable — was just great."

are a lot of other reasons why we should do it.

That's when marketing comes in: How can you best position a product, how can you sell it, what terms can you give to make sure that we benefit the most from the introduction? Ed has his plan. Marvel Books has their plan. My plan is that the Direct Market needs to get a toe-hold in servicing the needs of little kids. They have to be actually able to tell people, "Hey, there are little-kids comics." So for my particular part of the marketplace, the difficulties lie in promotion and publicity — there haven't been little-kid comics for a long time, the direct market is now going to be selling these books, and you've got to let people know they're available. So I came up with a program to encourage people to advertise the Star Comics line. That is — for the first time, I guess, in the history of comics — a comic-book publisher is going to be offering a hundred percent co-op, on advertising taken out on behalf of these Marvel Comics Star Books.

There are some limitations to the program — we don't want to spend nine million dollars promoting this line, but we've got a program that is going to plow a lot of money back into advertising and promotion so that the direct market can take advantage, as much as possible, of this new audience breakthrough. And each of the other divisions are doing similar types of promotion and publicity that are unique and appropriate for their type of distribution. That's what marketing people do. That's basically what sales people do — come up with projects to determine who their product is going to sell to, then develop marketing systems to allow that product to inform those would-be audiences that this product is available, so they'll be looking for it, and you develop ways of putting that product in as easily accessible a location as possible to reach the audience that it's designed for.


WE HAVE EVERY
SMASH
Or you want action—we have it!
Make sure you get every issue of your favorite MARVEL characters' adventures—PLUS lots of other special books and super-merchandise!
You'll never miss a smash!
Remember—nobody knows comics like we do!
YOUR LOGO/IMPRINT IN THIS AREA
THE HULK: ™ and © 1984 Marvel Comics Group

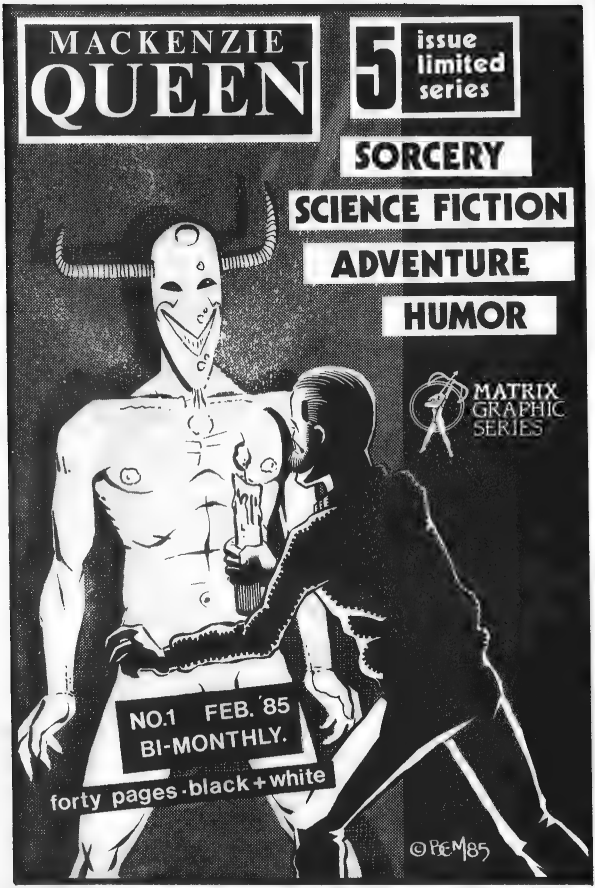
The Hulk stars in his own co-op ad — or else.

DAK: *Do you enjoy your job, Carol?*

CAROL: *Yeah.* Everybody who grows up and reads comics says, "I want to write comics!" or "I want to draw them!" or — very rarely — "I want to edit them!" or something along those lines. Well, I never wanted to do that. I wanted to sell them. I thought that the concept of such a peculiarly American medium, coupled with such a peculiarly American format — something so cheap and so disposable — was just great. I mean, this was the Ultimate Sales Device. This was real Americana. This was great. I grew up, and it was a toss-up between going into business or going into geology and digging up dinosaurs. Business called, because there's more money to be made there! *(Laughter.)* And comics *are* just so much fun to sell — they really are. I probably get more of a kick out of selling comics than most people get out of reading them or out of doing them, because it's such a challenge — getting people to read comics who have never read comics before, figuring out ways to lure people into reading a book that they normally would never look at for the first time — THE TRANSFORMERS — selling THE TRANSFORMERS was great! *(Laughter.)* Because to our market, selling a toy book is so tough. People look at it and say, "This is for somebody who's not me" and probably it is, but convincing them to try it once and find out if they like it, *that* is a real thrill.

DAK: *But how do you do that?*

CAROL: You can do it by trying to cast yourself as the person who's saying he doesn't want to read it. If you can do that you can find a weak link. What is the one thing that this person will always try? It might be you lure him into doing it through the artwork, or you might be able to do it by realizing, "Gee, he's really into Japanese animation. What is Japanese animation all about? Robots. What is THE TRANS-



Available from: Andromeda, Bud Plant, Capital City, Comics Unlimited, Diamond, Glenwood, Longhorn, Multi-Book, Second Genesis, Styx, Titan, and other fine distributors (farewell Pacific, we'll miss you!).

"Selling THE TRANSFORMERS was great!"

Spider-Man © 1984 MCG Transformers © 1984 Hasbro

FORMERS all about? Robots." So you can sell it on the basis of, "If you like Japanese animation, you're going to love THE TRANSFORMERS!" Or he just might be really into the idea of space comics, so you focus on the idea that the Transformers come from outerspace and come to Earth and turn into Volkswagens. You really have to locate why someone is reading comics, and then you have to address the fact that this comic book might very well meet that need. And then again, it might not. But can that person risk missing something he might enjoy? Figuring out a way to make sure that they realize this is, I think, an incredible thrill and very creative. I really see myself as a creative blending of marketing and sales. Sales, in so far as I have to figure out a way to get people to look at the comics we produce, and marketing, in that I have an incredible impact on the types of comics we produce. So, to a certain degree, I'm gratified when we come up with a comic book that, personally, I love, and I also believe that hundreds and thousands of other people will love. But I'm also gratified when we come up with a comic that does not appeal to a 29-year-old woman, but would appeal to a 16-year-old young man, if I can get that 16-year-old young man to look at that comic. Getting people to look at the comic that is created for them is an incredible thrill and, I find, incredibly rewarding.

SHOO! GO AWAY! YOU'RE ENDANGERING MY MISSION!
WELL, WE WOULDN'T WANT THAT TO HAPPEN! DON'T TELL ME--YOU WANT TO TAKE OVER THE WORLD! AM I RIGHT?!
BLASTED IDIOT! I'M ON YOUR SIDE!
THEN EXPLAIN WHY YOUR BUDDY IS TOSSING THAT AT US!
WHAT?!

"Selling a toy book is so tough." Here, Spidey toys with the Transformers — from issue #3.

DAK: *What's most exciting about your job?*

CAROL: Well, first of all, from my own standpoint, my job is exciting because it gives me a lot of satisfaction and a stream of challenges. It involves business aspects, which I love — and comics, which I also love. I don't know how many people can say this about their jobs, but my job could have been created just for me.

Secondly, I think having this job here makes a lot of people happy. My job as a marketing expert involves understanding the needs of the marketplace, the aims of the creators, and the means that a sales force can utilize to connect the two. With Marvel releasing many varied and even *genre* products, my job — of connecting different Marvel Comics with different buyers — becomes increasingly important. I'm not on the Editorial board and I don't tell editors their jobs, but I think it's valuable for me to report back what the marketplace says it wants, and to make sure that when it comes out, that that part of the marketplace knows it's coming and is waiting for it. Marvel Comics today is a group of very talented people producing comics for a very discerning marketplace, and I'm the conduit between them. I feel, as any good sales manager does, that I do my part by making sure the great material being turned out by my company reaches the people who want to see it. I'm kind of an efficency expert that way.

Masked representatives of Marvel and DC check out the competition at the new neighborhood comics outlet — Waldenbooks.

Spider-Man TM © 1984 MCG

Batman TM © 1984 DC Comics, Inc

——ADVERTISEMENT——

LETTERS TO: DALGODA

To read the letters page of most comics, you have to purchase the comic. Letters pages are often the most dynamic and revealing part of a comic, allowing readers to talk back to the creators. We at Fantagraphics Books want everyone to read the wonderful and thoughtful letters that we have received after the publication of *Dalgoda* #2

Dear People:

Dalgoda #2 was quite an intriguing one. Instead of plunging straight ahead into the fascinating stream of events originated in your debut issue, you took a bit of a break so that we could become more familiar with the characters. Also, I guess this lull is helpful in that it serves to emphasize that even in the farflung world of tomorrow, matters (especially bureaucratic matters) do not necessarily move along any more quickly or smoothly than they do in today's imperfect world.

Dalgoda's encounter with the dog-eating plant was wonderfully amusing. (Heartless me, laughing at the life-and-death plight of a poor alien.) However, it was Dennis Fujitake's character portrayals that caught my eye this time. Botanist Edwin Wallader was particularly delightful. He was a perfect picture of the socially strained scientist—pleasant yet unsure, polite yet more interested in his plants. (Of course, Jan Strnad's acute dialogue for him helped, too!) Even more impressive was Gunner Hathaway. In comics, it seems that all females (well, almost all) fall into two physical categories: (1) Absolute bombshells who'll knock your eyes out, or (2) mere ciphers. Intended to take up space on a page—but not much else. Hathaway is different, distinctive. She is certainly no bombshell; in fact, she looks a little seedy to me. But she has a personality, a vigor that gives her a peculiar charm. And Posey Ravencraft himself is a nice version of the Almost-Perfect-American-Hero—i.e., he *almost* looks the part of a clean-cut wonderguy, but there is something a bit shifty about him. Indeed, only Dalgoda comes across as looking to be totally without fault—the true, upstanding, courageous Hero. (Of course, I might be influenced by the fact that when I read the word "Candida," I seem to distort it into "Canada.")

T.M. Maple
Western Ontario
CANADA

1984 Strnad and Fujitake

Dear Fantagraphics Books,

Dalgoda is good. I don't know how it will sell, but I dig it. I like good science fiction. The interesting thing is ... I almost didn't buy it at all. I frequent a store that bags all their stuff ahead of time, so it tends to cut back on my experimentation. The only reason I bought the book was because I recognized Strnad's name from some of my old underground comix. This month's *FF* (censored), *Peter Parker* was the same old (censored). Barry Smith is finally back to blow people away with the new *X-Men*. Amer*ican Flagg!* got a new artist. *Cap'n Quick and a Foozle* was great. *Ronin* finished real nice ... and you gave did a [censored] good job. Thumbs up for *Dal*.

Daniel Preston
St. Cloud, MN

Dear Dog Lovers,

It's books like *Dalgoda* that keep me reading comics after all these years. Nothing profound, nothing earthshaking, just good solid writing and attractive artwork. Enough seriousness to keep me interested, but enough humor to keep it fun. A few specific observations:

Dalgoda's people are not descended from Earth canines, but apparently from dog-like ancestors on Canis Nonetheless. Dalgoda exhibits traits that are typically those of normal Earth-bound dogs, such as acute hearing, acute sense of smell, and a large, indiscriminate appetite. (I loved his reaction to the overripe hamburger in issue #1—it brought back memories of all the garbage cans plundered by a Labrador retriever I once had.) And of course, there's the Mobtis Strangulatum from Reg7, which obviously finds any differences between canine and Candan too trivial to worry about. I trust you'll continue to reveal further similarities, both physiological and psychological.

I appreciate the way Dennis Fujitake draws his people to look like real people—the men don't all look like bodybuilders, and the women don't all look like Playmates. This realistic rendering complements Jan Strnad's writing, and makes for believable, three-dimensional characters.

What does the symbol on Dalgoda's chest mean, and what exactly did he write at the bottom of the contract he signed in issue 1? Is Dalgoda's writing Japanese, or does Dennis just make up meaningless symbols that look Japanese?

Kenneth Smith's coloring is excellent. I'm glad to see colorists who know how to use better paper, getting rich, vibrant color without sacrificing subtlety (in contrast to early attempts to take advantage of higher-quality paper, which looked like someone used a spatula to glop on day-glo paint).

"Grimwood's Daughter" is an interesting back-up feature, a dark, strangely naturalistic Elf story to contrast the whimsical "Dogs in Space." There are other contrasts and similarities—one is set in the future, the other in the past, but both have a very strong dose of verisimilitude. Both are centered around an impeding war of extinction, but in one, humanoid is the potential victim, and in the other, we are the aggressors. And in "Dalgoda," the mood has that far been light, but the potential is there for much more serious stories—while in "Grimwood's Daughter," we are given a hint at the end of the first installment that pervading gloom may be broken from time to time by a little sunlight. I look forward to watching these two stories grow and develop.

Hank Hoeft
Arlington, TX

We will be publishing more letters to Dalgoda in every issue from #3 on. Send letters to Dal c/o Fantagraphics Books, 707 Camino Mananzes, Thousand Oaks, CA 91360. And watch this space for letters on Dalgoda #3!

DOG Vs. ZOMBDROID!

In the spectacular third issue of ***Dalgoda***, our canine hero finds himself assaulted by a science-produced monstrosity! Story by **Strnad**, art by **Fujitake**, coloring by **Smith!**

Grimwood's Daughter

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DALGODA #3 ships on December 18—in time for Christmas; DALGODA #4 ships on January 30!

LAST WORD

Comics Interview 234 Fifth Ave. Suite 301 New York, NY 10001

VALUES COMICS INTERVIEW MORE THAN MANY COMICS!

Dear DAK:

When I first subscribed to COMICS INTERVIEW I thought I might be taking a risk. It was new, but the basic concept sounded excellent.

DAYS after mailing in my subscription fee, I received my first issue. IT WAS FANTASTIC!

My mistake came a few months later when I didn't re-subscribe.

I never got around to it. I never had the money. My mind was on other things. I started new hobbies and directed my attention to them instead. You've probably heard all of these, but in my case they are all true and have all occurred simultaneously. That can be a problem.

I doubt you can see me here, but I am on my knees begging you to start my re-subscription with the issues I've missed.

COMICS INTERVIEW is an excellent magazine which I value more than many of my comics.

Glenn S. Peffers
Rt. #5, 846 S. Townline Rd.
Gaylord, MI 49735

Well, when you put it that way, Glenn — how can I deny such an earnest entreaty? But let this letter be a lesson, if there are any among our readers who contemplate the folly of a life lived without COMICS INTERVIEW!

—DAK

OPEN AND HONEST

Dear DAK,

I have been reading COMICS INTERVIEW since issue #1, and I must say that #13 was the best one yet!

I was very glad you interviewed Gerry **Conway** and **Roy Thomas**, as it helped me understand them better.

Every month I read the books that they write and find them somewhat enjoyable. ATARI FORCE is one of my favorites — with ALL-STAR SQUADRON and ARAK not far behind.

I do have a negative response to **Mr. Conway**'s view of the JUSTICE LEAGUE, however. I had been reading it for twelve years and I suddenly dropped it. Why? Because I didn't care for the changes in the League's membership. Don't get me wrong. I have nothing against **Mr. Conway** personally. I just don't care for what he's done with the JUSTICE LEAGUE, that's why I dropped it.

Earnest Ernie Colon.

I also enjoyed the **Don Rosa** interview. I bought and loved DON ROSA'S COMICS AND STORIES #1 and #2. Therefore, I was very disappointed when Fantagraphics sent me a letter informing me of the cancellation of the book. They blamed it on poor sales and **Mr. Rosa's** lateness. I felt crushed when I read those words. DRC&S was one of the last of the humor-oriented books, now that CAPTAIN CARROT and his kind are gone. Hopefully, one day **Mr. Rosa** will get around to DRC&S #3.

I also enjoyed the **Ernie Colon** interview. Seldom have I seen an inteview where the subject is so open and so honest about the industry as a whole. I previously was unaware that he worked at Harvey. No wonder the art was always so good. But why was some of it different than other work he did? Early ARAKs are in one style, while AMETHYST is done in another. However, whether I like his art or not (sometimes I do and sometimes I don't), is not the point. I admire the man's determination to tell his view of the industry and not worry about possible ostracism by his peers. This enables me to admire the man and his work more.

Harlan Krissoff
184 Karney Avenue
Perth Amboy, NJ 08861

MOST OF MY OPINIONS ARE NOT VERY POPULAR

Dear Bill:

Thank you for the copies of COMICS INTERVIEW. I wasn't able to get any other copies at DC, so yours came in handy. (My mom was grateful, I can tell you.)

I'm glad you enjoyed transcribing it — that task goes down in my book as one of the great thankless jobs — listening to someone's blatherings over and over... Anyway, I did enjoy it myself and have gotten a great many very favorable comments on it.

Comics Buyer's Guide
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Please type or print your vote and information clearly.

Thanks for returning the photos and please thank Dave for the opportunity to air a couple of views. Most of my opinions are not very popular with some pros, though I have a lively correspondence with a lot of fans.

Anyway — talk to you again. Take care and keep in touch.

Ernie Colon
New York City

"I HAVE NOTHING TO DECLARE EXCEPT MY GENIUS"

Dear David:

I want to thank **Ernie Colon** for his very generous comments in issue #13. Clearly, he remains one of the industry's true gentlemen — not to mention one of its most remarkable talents. If working with him was one of the genuine pleasures of the Atlas/Seaboard days, then our parting on "not-good terms" remains one of my most bitter disappointments. (For which, incidentally, I offer a belated *mea culpa*. Ernie has far too much class to have initiated that kind of screw-up.)

I have continued to follow his career as a friend *emeritus* and devoted fan, and marvel still at the breadth of his abilities. However, as Roger's fine interview underscores, Ernie's modesty continues to infuriate. Once, upon approaching a customs agent, **Oscar Wilde** said, "I have nothing to declare except my genius." Since Ernie is too self-effacing to mount that kind of display, I'll do it for him — and, while I'm at it, wish him another fifty-two years of even greater achievements.

Jeff Rovin
Bethel, CT

ANOTHER POWER BLAST

Dear Mr. Kraft.

Re: **Paul Power**'s letter in COMICS INTERVIEW #14. In regard to helping **Dave Stevens** and **Rick Hoberg** "out of a jam," Paul failed to mention that I was the inker for that book (WHAT IF?). Rick pencilled most of the book and I inked that. **Dave Stevens** pencilled and inked (assisted by **Bil Stout**) the last five or six pages. Paul was my roommate at the time and asked me if I would like a hand. I said yes, and let him ink two or three backgrounds. The "rest of the animation layout dept." was a friend of Rick's who tightened pencils on one or two pages.

As for **Power**'s work being "too cartoony," that's the quality I liked about it. In fact, there are many pages in his portfolio that I enjoyed inking. As to the OMEGA MEN script being "stupid," I've found Paul could only maintain interest drawing comics featuring himself (like the page of his art you printed). I'm really looking foward to Paul's ROCK WARRIOR movie and I sure wish someone would print his "graphic novel" that you featured a page from.

William Wray
465 West Broadway
New York, NY 10012

SECRET WARS WAS THE BIG BANG

Dear DAK,

These are my opinions on COMICS INTERVIEW #14, starting from the beginning:

The spotlight on MARVEL SUPER-HEROES SECRET WARS was truly amusing. As most of us know, this was the Big Bang news first reported in the COMICS BUYER'S GUIDE in 1982, and denied by Marvel in a very loathesome manner. This very thing has hopelessly wrecked most of Marvel's characters.

On **Steve Englehart**: While I don't read COYOTE, I certainly look forward to see-

Detail from the cover of SECRET WARS #2.

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GIFFEN & GERBER

KEITH GIFFEN on the making of **The Omega Men** — STEVE GERBER speaks out on comics — **X-Men** inker TERRY AUSTIN talks — Marvel's top man, JIM GALTON, tells all — and much more in this premiere issue! Cover by GIFFEN & DECARLO.

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Hot artist JOSE LUIS GARCIA LOPEZ **(Teen Titans, Atari Force)** tells what's wrong with American comics — star scripter ALAN MOORE talks about turning superheroes inside out — LOUISE SIMONSON on the **X-Men** — more! Outstanding cover by LOPEZ.

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ing his and **Dave Cockrum**'s rendition of the T.H.U.N.D.E.R. AGENTS. Who cares about the X-MEN?

It's great to see an inteview with **Matt Wagner**. I've been looking forward to this.

Gary Groth, I'm sorry to say, is one of these people who can take all his stumbling blocks and build them as a barricade around himself.

I'm afraid that **Mike Grabowski** is the lowest man on the totem pole this ish, and if I had any sympathy left for his kind, I'd almost feel sorry for him. I think that **Jim Van Hise**'s letter in #14 is something that he should read, because if **Mr. Grabowski** — and **Warren Reece**, for that matter — are examples of Marvel readers, then they can lay no claim to being *true* comics fans. When I write my letters, I write them to induce *change*, any change for the better.

I have some suggestions to up the usual quality of your magazine. How about an all-MAD-magazine issue of CI? Also, some interviews with newspaper strip artists like **Reggie Smythe**, **Charles Schultz**, and **Hank Ketchum** are in order. All three of these men are titans in their own right.

One final request, Dave: Why don't you interview **David Kraft**? I haven't seen all that much of his work lately. I really would like to know what happend to him — I feel his MAN-WOLF stories are much unnoticed.

Jonathan Smith
Philadelphia, PA

Dave Cockrum and Keith Giffen talk about T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents in COMICS INTERVIEW #20. Ask your comics dealer to reserve a copy now.

If you want to know what I've been up to, Jon (and I've been up to a lot), check out my editorial in issue #12. That's about as close to seeing an interview with me as you can get, unless you count the plotting session I had with Roger Slifer and Mike Barr back in #8.

—DAK

DAVID ANTHONY KRAFT'S COMICS interVIEW

Interviews are always the most interesting feature of any comics magazine — you probably flip to them first, yourself. Now! At last! A high-quality monthly magazine that interviews today's top talents, yesterday's legendary greats, and all the other people involved in every aspect of comics!

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LOVES NULL & VOID

Dear DAK:

Thank you for such a publication, and for your dignified writing on WORLD'S FINEST COMICS (love Null & Void). I'd like to see you try your hand at scripting some issues of THRILLER (if it returns). You and **Gil Kane** should get together, to finish his **BLACKMARK**.

David Gerald Cobb Hamilton
1101 East Kay Street
Compton, California 90221

MORE FORGOTTEN GREATS

Dear DAK and crew,

You're doing *fine* on COMICS INTERVIEW! As to what I'd like to see in the future — I'd like to see more interviews with some of the older pros — artists like: **Alex Toth**(!), **Frank Robbins, Lee Elias, John Severin, Russ Heath, Jerry Robinson, Murphy Anderson, Stan Drake,** etc.!

Also there are some artists I've *never* seen an interview with! (Scoop!) Such as **Ditko** (impossible?), or **Infantino**! Of course, I'd love to see stuff on these guys!

I enjoy the articles on the production people, fans, etc. Keep that up.

How about interviews with the forgotten greats or *who* did *what* on DC's features like BATMAN (I'm talking about the "ghosts" on the early issues)?

If you can get *any* of the interviews I mentioned I'll be thrilled! So thrill me, already! Keep it coming! Thanks!

Don Mangus
3019 Oliver Street
Dallas, TX 75205

BATTY ABOUT BATMAN

Dear People:

COMICS INTERVIEW #14 was the first time I've read your magazine and I must say I was very impressed!

Especially interesting was the interview with **Matt Wagner**. The talented artist/writer hit the nail right on the head when it came down to The Batman's problems.

The Batman *has* been screwed up in so many ways it's ridiculous. His strip now reads more like a soap opera than that of a man obsessed with eliminating evil.

The Batman should be a vigilante, take the law into his own hands. He should use his informants more often, do whatever he has to in order to obtain information, use his disguises, break his word. The Batman is due for some changes. I have gut feelings that there are more fans that feel the way I do than DC lets on. Tradition is The Batman's hang up, and that's too bad. I wonder if sales really are so high for BATMAN and DETECTIVE COMICS that they can't experiment with change.

I know this sounds like a letter that should be addressed to the subject I'm writing about, but this letter wouldn't see the light of day in DETECTIVE or BATMAN comics! I've already tried, which brings me to my next point.

The Batman, as depicted by artist Matt Wagner.

Not only is your magazine enjoyable and informative, but it also offers the opportunity for fans to express their *true* feelings about a comic book. Too often, it seems that the only letters that get printed are the ones that "go with the flow."

I don't write letters so they get printed, I write them because I feel I have something to say about what I paid for. I did pay for your magazine and I enjoyed it very much. Thanks for listening.

Joe Rivera
Cleveland, Ohio

REJECTS PERSONAL ATTACKS

Dear fellow comicologists,

The letters to this magazine regarding my interview were interesting. As quickly as possible, let me clarify myself in response to the published remarks of **James Van Hise** and **T.M. Maple.**

My 1975 appearance on THE TOMORROW SHOW was meant to balance the one-sided SUPERMAN hype of a previous guest, and the remarks about my performance written by **Murray Bishoff,** in a 1975 BUYER'S GUIDE, were quite favorable. I also got congratulations from far and wide. As for one of the other guests, who shall remain nameless, he made very degrading remarks about comics, such as: "You read a comic in the bathroom in five minutes, and that's that." He categorically denied that comics had any adult quality.

Next, to imply I'm no comics fan because I'm a Marvel specialist is as ludicrous as implying that **Dr. DeBakey** is no doctor because he's a heart specialist. One can't collect everything, and be thorough. Back in the Sixties, the serious world rejected comics in reaction to characters like Superman, Batman, Donald Duck, and other symbols of childhood. The Marvel Comics Group and its hardcore fans countered that image. Folks didn't know who the FF, Spidey, or Hulk were, in those days, nor did they know who **Lee, Kirby, Ditko,** or **Everett** were. The public had a harder time ridiculing them, as a result. Marvel was a very hip, cultish thing to be into back in the Sixties.

Now, to attack me for discussing *my* favorite mags instead of someone else's is entirely unfair. No one boosts causes that he or she doesn't like. That's the job of the opposition. True, I have a scholar's knowledge of comics history, but I don't love and respect everything. No one does, as far as I know. Furthermore, I make no claim of representing all fans, except, perhaps, in my opposition to price guides and unscrupulous market manipulators; and even there, I have detractors. However, I

CONAN!

GERRY CONWAY and ROY THOMAS sound off on scripting movies *(Conan, Fire & Ice)* and comics — a two-fisted talk with outspoken artist ERNIE COLON — porn star KELLY NICHOLS — DON ROSA — more!

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SECRET WARS

JIM SHOOTER talks about the bestselling superhero epic! Plus: GARY GROTH of **Comics Journal**! Scripter STEVE ENGLEHART sounds off on **Silver Surfer** and other surprises! Super **Secret** Warscover by MIKE ZECK!

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sincerely believe the things I say. Those who feel otherwise could express their opinions without being acrimonious and vituperative towards *me personally.*

On the point about collecting the big books, **Mr. Maple** was right on the button. I didn't have big money, and I did build by stages, dealing doubles of mags to help finance my work as a collector. Furthermore, he's right when he says that the "break-in-point" is too high, now; and it will remain so as long as price guides and dealers determine arbitrary values, rather than a mathematical scale of relative proportional values.

Anyway, I thank everyone who's taken an interest in what I'm doing as a comicologist. I hope they'll get something good out of "The Marvel Age Retrospective" series in MARVEL AGE magazine, which should be better than ever now that **Jim Salicrup** and **Sandy Hausler** are *personally* proofreading my manuscripts; and, of course, I wish every nice colleague the very best with his or her own worthy pursuits, comicological, or otherwise.

Warren Reece: Curator,
Chamber of Fantasy, and
Marvel's Freelance Archivist

PS: People wishing a personal reply should send their letters to me in care of MARVEL AGE, Marvel Comics, 387 Park Avenue South, New York, NY 10016, along with a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

COMICS INTERVIEW IS THE BEST!

Dear Dave:

I'd like to renew my subscription to COMICS INTERVIEW. Please find enclosed a money order for $24.00 for another twelve issues.

The last few issues have been very interesting. I loved the interview with **Tom Orzechowski** on lettering and the **Garcia Lopez** interview, for which I have been waiting for some time.

I was wondering if you're planning to interview **Brian Bolland, Joe Rubinstein** or **Curt Swan**? I hope you consider these three gentlemen for future issues. Keep up the fine work: This is the best book around when it comes to finding out about the people who produce the comics!

Kenny McFarlane
P.O. Box 454
Newmarket, NH 03857

BYRNE & DITKO

The Charlton Portfolio, edited by BOB LAYTON & ROGER STERN, is a lavishly-illustrated collection of articles (including DON ROSA checklists) about the **Charlton** heroes of the '60s & '70s! Includes art by BYRNE, GIORDANO, STATON, many more! Plus a reprint of a complete DITKO **Blue Beetle!**

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NEXT ISSUE: British artist *Brian Bolland,* widely acclaimed for his work on JUDGE DREDD and CAMELOT 3000, breaks the silence about the secret BATMAN VERSUS JUDGE DREDD project he and *Alan Moore* have been working on — and why it may never see print! We take you behind the scenes at the COMICS BUYER'S GUIDE for a talk with *Don & Maggie Thompson.* And *Scott McCloud* finally gets around to talking about ZOT! in part two of his interview. All this — and lots more! Don't miss COMICS INTERVIEW #19.

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- Whisper (Capital Publ.)

ECLIPSE COMICS
- Alien Encounters
- Destroyer Duck
- DNAgents
- Eclipse
- Hall of Fame Series

ECLIPSE COMICS
- Jon Law (Mr. Essex)
- Ms. Tree
- Sabre
- Scorpio Rose
- Any Eclipse # 1

AMERICOMICS
- Americomics
- Americomics Special
- Black Diamond
- Bolt & Star Force 6
- Fun Comics
- Sentinels of Justice
- Any Americomics # 1

EAGLE COMICS
- Airboy (Hasbro)
- Bloodstar (James Bond)
- Comic Book Price Guide Update # 2
- Comic Fandom's Forum
- Comic Interview
- Comic News
- Comic Reader
- Comics Collector
- Comics Feature
- Comics Interview
- Comics Journal
- Comics Scene
- Enterprise Incidents
- Fanfare
- Fantasy Chronicles Series
- Fantastic Explosion
- Fantasy Book (SF)
- Fantasy Empire
- Fantasy Images
- Golden Age of Comics
- Marvel Comics Index
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